

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

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BRIDGE OF HOPE

23 YEARS OF BVS IN MOSTAR

DIKAIOS & DISCIPLESHIP

JULY 2-3, 2019 GREENSBORO, NC

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RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE

A HISTORY OF FAITH



LAND AND LAMENT | DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY
MUSEUM OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN
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on the cover

The Stari Most bridge was built in 1557. It stood for 427 years in Mostar in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. The landmark was destroyed in 1993 during the war. When the first Brethren Volunteer Service worker to serve in Mostar, Monica Honn Goletiani (above), went there in 1995, only a cable bridge connected the city. The new bridge shown on the cover was completed in 2004 and closely matches the original. Cover photo by Faruk Kaymak/unsplash.com

Letting go

In an essay about lost gloves, *Chicago Tribune* columnist **Mary Schmich** passes along the story of a woman who exited a train car and discovered that she had only one of her gloves. Just before the doors closed



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

behind her, she tossed it back inside. “Better someone had two, if not her,” the storyteller recounted.

I know I couldn’t have acted so quickly, and I’m not sure that my first impulse would have been so generous. But with little hesitation, the woman leaving the train shifted from thinking of herself to thinking of someone else, from regretting the lost glove to giving her pair to another traveler. How does one learn to let go so easily?

There are people who give something up for Lent, but this month I’m thinking more about letting go. These are different, but not completely. Giving something up is about sacrifice; letting go is about freedom. Both clear space for what matters. Both can provide spiritual focus.

What shall we let go of?

- Stuff that weighs us down—single gloves awaiting lost mates, unused dishes, clothes that don’t fit. I recently let go of the heaviest thing in the house, an upright piano that was too big for our small living room. (I thought someday I might take lessons, but I let the unfulfilled idea go out the door with the piano.)
- The compulsion to acquire more. It’s bad for us, our neighbors, and the earth. And someday we’ll have to haul that stuff to the second-hand store.
- The need to be in control. We’re not. Go ahead and make long-range plans, but hold them lightly.
- Resentments and complaints. Grudges are easy to nurse, but they eventually poison our hearts. Resentment can actually shorten our lives.
- Fear of what might happen. We are not our best selves when we are afraid. Sometimes fear is a weapon used against others; sometimes it’s a cancer that attacks its own body. Either way it’s too violent for those who want to build peace.
- Outrage. Sometimes it’s justifiable and sometimes it works, but it’s caustic. We would do better replacing outrage with lament and compassion and action.

That’s a lot of letting go, but if we keep practicing it will become easier—even second nature. When the doors are closing, we can turn losses into something good. We can be the stories that are passed along to others, who happily hold them as warm gifts in cold hands.

Wendy McFadden

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Celebrating fruitcake

New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren has been faithfully supporting the denomination with proceeds from an annual fruitcake fundraiser. The congregation sends about \$1,000—and home-made fruitcake—as a “holiday treat” to the Church of the Brethren General Offices each year. Coincidentally, Dec. 27 is National Fruitcake Day.

The dried fruit concoction is low in sugar and high in protein and relatively good for you (as far as a dessert can be). The fruitcake “Mamas” at New Carlisle, Sue Buckles and Pat Krabacher, use a recipe from a *Women’s Day* article titled “The Five Greatest Cakes for Christmas.”

Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service, loves the fruitcake sent every Christmas to the General Offices—both the traditional recipe that includes dates, cherries, pineapple, and pecans, and the “anti-oxidant version” that includes apricots, cranberries, cherries, and pecans. —Pat Krabacher



Pat Krabacher

Reaching for social justice

Jennie Waering of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., made the front page of *The Roanoke Times* when she retired after 35 years as a federal prosecutor, at the end of 2018.

The extensive newspaper piece published Dec. 29 focused on her retirement plans to do more social justice work, “to support more deeply the missions and ministries in the Roanoke Valley that oppose hate, help the poor, and reach across the divisions of faith and ethnicity.”

She told the newspaper: “Seems to me we need to stand up to violence and hate in all its forms. . . . I don’t know all the answers yet. I just know I want to explore it.”

Sankofa Journey leads to worship exchange

After Jerry Crouse and Morris Collins became friends on a Sankofa Journey in 2014, their two churches have begun to share worship together.

Collins is pastor of Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church, an African-American congregation. Crouse pastors Warrensburg (Mo.) Church of the Brethren, a predominantly white congregation. On Jan. 27, the Sunday after Martin Luther King Day, Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church traveled across the city to worship with the Warrensburg congregation, and the Brethren provided a

meal. On Feb. 17, Warrensburg Church of the Brethren went to worship with the Jesus Saves congregation and joined in a meal there.

Collins approached Crouse with the idea for the worship exchange, reported the *Daily Star-Journal* of Warrensburg in an article titled “Unity in Christ, Not Segregation by Color.”



Jerry Crouse and Morris Collins on a Sankofa Journey.

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.

Still preaching after all these years

The year was 2001 and William Hill Gardens Assisted Living Residence was being built in Easton, Md. As the walls were going up, staff was being hired. A chaplain was needed, someone to give spiritual guidance on a weekly basis to the new residents.

As the first administrator there, finding a chaplain proved to be thought-provoking, especially because the budget was already stretched. I turned to the best person I could think of and called on John Earl Hutchison from my own church, Fairview Church of the Brethren in Cordova. I asked if he might consider volun-



Linda Schwarten Evans

teering his services for one Sunday.

Hutchison answered the call and gave a spiritual message one Sunday a month to the residents, which was especially important to senior citizens in new surroundings, needing a sense of safety, security, and God's presence.

He continued to give the message each month until December 2012, when he began to cover every Sunday. On rare occasions when he could not be there,

he secured other speakers, often calling on Laura Swann, Scott Burke, Bobby Davis, and John and Linda Evans from the Fairview Church.

In recent years, he has delivered two messages each week, one to the general population and a second to those in a memory-

impaired residence. To relate to the two groups takes a special person, and staff and families are impacted as well. To provide these sermons means that he is not able to attend his home church with his wife, Mary Ellen.

"We are honored to have people such as Mr. John Hutchison offer his gifts in service to our residents," said Marianne S. Ell, director of spiritual life at the Gardens.

When asked about his service, Hutchison's comment was, "God asked, I said no, no, maybe, then yes." About his "congregation," he says, "I hope God has also blessed them. . . . They feel like family—God's family uniting together to serve others and God."

Asked to give one sermon in 2001, he is still volunteering and preaching. To date, he has given 500-plus sermons. —Linda Schwarten Evans



John Sgro

Garage sale aids disaster relief

For the last six summers in June, Oakland Church of the Brethren near Gettysburg, Ohio, has opened its doors for a large garage sale benefiting Brethren Disaster Ministries. Items are donated by church members as well as people from the county.

Many Oakland members—about 30 to 40 volunteers—along with the youth (who serve lunch) greet, organize, sort, and display items in the fellowship hall for the two-and-a-half day sale. Church volunteers even help shoppers load their vehicles. All the money raised is through donations, there are no prices marked on items and customers pay what they feel they can. After the sale a neighboring church gathers up unsold clothing and household items for a free give-away in underprivileged communities.

Over six years, this annual sale has raised around \$15,000 for disaster relief. —John Sgro

Pastor protests government shutdown

To commemorate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., pastor Gary Benesh of Friendship Church of the Brethren in North Wilkesboro, N.C., staged a one-man protest of the government shutdown in front of the Wilkes Heritage Museum on Jan. 21.

"The sign he made and displayed said it all in red dry-erase ink," reported the *Wilkes Journal-Patriot*. "Not paying workers for their work is immoral."

His personal statement about the shutdown cited Leviticus 19:13, "You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning," as well as Jeremiah 22:13 and James 5:3-4.



“So don’t lose a minute in building on what you’ve been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus” –2 Peter 1:5-8, The Message

Church of the Brethren workcamps Did you know . . . ?

1988 The year the youth and young adult workcamp program in its current form was started by Chris Douglas, then serving as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Church of the Brethren.

300 The approximate average number of junior and senior high youth, young adults, and advisors who take part in the denomination’s workcamps each summer.

19 The total number of workcamps offered this summer: 6 for junior highs, 10 for senior highs, 2 for young adults, and 1 “We Are Able” workcamp for youth and young adults living with disabilities.

14 The number of US states that will host workcamps this summer: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Workcamps also will take place in Washington, D.C., and China.

6,700 Approximate distance in miles to the farthest workcamp being held this year, a young adult workcamp in Shanxi Province, China.

April 1 Deadline for payment of full registration fees for the 2019 workcamps.

June 8 Date that the first of this summer’s workcamps begins in New Meadows, Idaho, for senior high youth.

Learn more and register at www.brethren.org/workcamps.



Left: Monica Honn Goletiani in 1995 on the cable bridge that temporarily replaced the one destroyed in the Bosnian War. Above: Rebecca Neiman, the last BVS volunteer at OKC Abrašević.

CROSSING THE BRIDGE

23 YEARS OF BVS SERVICE IN MOSTAR

by Jan Fischer Bachman

For over 400 years, the Stari Most (“Old Bridge”) gracefully connected the two sides of the Neretva River in the city of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina. It belonged to all, Bosniak, Croat, and Serb, a point of pride and a launching site for generations of adrenaline-fueled high divers and jumpers. In 1993, during the Bosnian War, military forces destroyed the bridge. A temporary cable structure spanned the gap when Monica Honn Goletiani arrived as the first Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) volunteer at *Mladi Most* (“Young Bridge”) Youth Center.

Brethren Volunteer Service projects in the Balkans came to an end last year. What has this chapter meant? Here are some impressions of the struggles and learning that took place in Mostar over the years.

A LEAP OF FAITH

“Going to a brand-new project in a country still in a war zone took an enormous leap of faith,” Kristin Flory, BVS Europe coordinator, says of Goletiani.

“Mostar in March 1995 was still a very divided city with checkpoints, bombed-out buildings, Jersey barriers, and regular shelling,” remembers Goletiani. “But then two blocks from Mladi Most was the Ero Hotel and the European Union headquarters and you’d never know you were in a conflict zone, aside from all the people in military uniforms.”

Mladi Most described itself as a “challenging grassroots peacebuilding project trying to bring people from all cultural/religious/national backgrounds together.”

Tina Ćorić, then a teen participant, recalls, “We couldn’t cross to the other side of the city, and there was a curfew



“MOSTAR IN MARCH 1995 WAS STILL A VERY DIVIDED CITY WITH CHECKPOINTS, BOMBED-OUT BUILDINGS, JERSEY BARRIERS, AND REGULAR SHELLING,” REMEMBERS GOLETIANI. “BUT THEN TWO BLOCKS FROM MLADI MOST WAS THE ERO HOTEL AND THE EUROPEAN UNION HEADQUARTERS AND YOU’D NEVER KNOW YOU WERE IN A CONFLICT ZONE.”

sometimes, so it wasn’t very easy to be a teenager then. And the Mladi Most house was a safe haven for us.

“Most of the outside activities were done in so-called East Mostar, where we locals could not cross,” Ćorić explains, “so the international volunteers would get their passes from the UNHCR and they were able to cross with the UN vehicles. . . . We started to connect people from east and west even without the technology that we have today. We managed to send songs to each other so there was a kind of musical exchange. And we did the first magazine, with the volunteers crossing over, taking photocopies and texts.

“All roads lead to Rome,” she continues, “and here all the roads lead to Mladi Most because all of us who are doing something today, or have done something, or have changed something, or have become something, we all began at Mladi Most. People’s confidence started there: somebody encouraging, ‘It’s possible, you can do it.’”

Goletiani taught English lessons and became the person who coordinated with the European Union and the local police. “We invited and hosted numerous organizations,” she says, “one of the more memorable being Clowns Without Borders, when they gave a ride to some local children outside the city, and we had to intervene with the local police to prove they weren’t kidnapping the children.”

She describes memories “so bizarre you wonder if they’re true”: stopping for a fully-clothed dip in the river on the way to English classes in the east, arriving dry because the summer was so hot; being taken to the police station and hearing her phone conversations quoted, confirming that the phone was tapped; sitting in the living room while someone’s father threatened them with a hand grenade; surviving a neighbor shooting their dog.

DIVING IN

From that time through 2018, 14 BVSers served in Mostar. Flory says, “They had to dive in and get totally immersed to learn the new language . . . new culture, new way of working, thinking, being. Diving in, but then floating, because it takes a long time to figure things out.”

By 1998, the temporary suspension bridge over the Neretva River had been replaced by a more stable wooden foot bridge, according to Flory’s travel notes. “Much has changed in Mostar,” she wrote. “One still sees buildings in ruins, but cafes and restaurants are lively.”

“We often tell people that volunteering in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1998-1999 was like three years of life experience packed into 13 months,” remembers Tamiko Rothhorn. “The Mladi Most project was being re-envisioned and there was a lot of positive energy and hope being poured into the house and its creative activities, which ultimately was about building bridges between youth in the community.”

“The side-by-side juxtaposition here of two diametrically opposed worlds is mind-boggling,” Rebecca Blocksome (2002-2004) shared in a project report. “It’s not just the contrast between east and west, Muslim and Croat—the town is divided in other ways, too. There’s the juxtaposition between old and new, which means between destroyed and rebuilt. . . . And the juxtaposition between local and international, which means between economic classes—just barely scraping by or wallowing in Euros.

“In my language book, the words for ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘which,’ ‘when,’ and ‘where’ are introduced in the second chapter, but the word for ‘why’ doesn’t appear until Chapter 19. I first thought it was an example of the editor’s ineptitude, but now I think I should have given her more credit for understanding how westerners should approach life in the Balkans. Things here don’t fit neatly into our paradigms of logic—instead of one answer, there are many answers, all of them right; or perhaps, all of them wrong. To approach this country as a puzzle to be solved is to trivialize the incredible complexity of issues here, and to ignore the fact that people cannot be ‘solved.’ . . . For now I’m trying very





hard not to be too concerned with the ‘why,’ but just to listen and to learn.”

Mladi Most changed location three times and in 2003 joined with other organizations to create a youth cultural center, OKC Abrašević, to be based in the ruins of the former Workers Cultural Center.

OKC ABRAŠEVIĆ

A co-founder, Ćorić says, “We were present in the streets a lot; we made the first post-war parade where people moved across the bridges, and we got equal support on both sides with people applauding. We’d thought they would throw rocks, but people were actually really happy that someone wanted to revitalize Abrašević.”

BVSer Katie Hampton (left) with Tina Ćorić, a co-founder of OKC Abrašević.

PARADE OF CONSEQUENCE

by Scot McElvany

Descending through the hills down the winding road into the central valley of Herzegovina was like living through every entry a thesaurus could spit out for the word bleak: desolate, dreary, barren. This was early 1996 and, despite its Mediterranean climate, Mostar had no fear of winter. It was cold, much colder than expected. It was also terrifying, but I kept that to myself.

For those traveling with me in that Skoda hatchback, loaded with an assortment of luggage, food, office supplies, sports equipment, workshop and facilitation kits, it was a re-entry back to Mostar after escalating riots in the city had forced the evacuation of the international volunteers. But for me it was just the beginning of what would end up being a two-year placement at the Youth and Reconciliation Center Mladi Most. It was also the beginning of what I’ve begun to call the “extremely/kind-of” paradox. It’s extremely cold, does the heating work? Kind of. It’s extremely dark, do the lights work? Kind of. This city is extremely destroyed, is it safe? Yeah, kind of.

Arriving at the youth center, a repurposed residential house located within a stone’s throw of the confrontation line between east and west Mostar, I couldn’t shake the feeling we were somehow trespassing. That we, or better I, didn’t belong there.

The house, though structurally solid with an intact roof and actual walls—something that could hardly be said of any of the buildings directly across the street—was in complete disarray. It was dusty, dark, and morbidly cold, and the interior furnishings of the immediately visible room consisted of one brown, armless couch with its cushions dispersed across a wooden floor that had gathered enough dirt as to appear grey in color. It felt chaotic and improvised.

I couldn’t have known then, and it’s a fine thing I didn’t, that chaotic and improvised would be as deeply woven into the fabric of my experience in that city as would coffee, borders, frustration, confusion, the witnessing of a continuous parade of consequences resulting from the near complete and total loss of civil structures, as well as some of the most profound and meaningful moments I have, to this day, ever experienced.

A few of these moments were a result of the youth theater projects I was involved in and developed alongside colleagues, mentors, and the extraordinary young people who were looking to occupy their time in meaningful ways in this post-war, decomposed city. Most of these profound moments, however, came in the form of simple conversation and sharing time and space with the people, young and old, who passed through the youth center and somehow through my life.

Bosnian has a word for this—*merak*. That word represents the deep enjoyment and appreciation of time. I know that word because of a young Bosnian woman named Heidi who participated in one of our projects. After witnessing me down an espresso much in the way of an Italian during café rush hour, she looked at me with such consternation and dread that I couldn’t keep myself from imagining this young Muslim woman as a nun. “You don’t understand *merak*,” she said beratingly and with a touch of disgust for my brutish manners.

She was wrong. I understood it in that moment, more than ever. Here was

Meanwhile, an international coalition had been working to rebuild the Stari Most bridge, which opened in July 2004. UNESCO has named it a World Heritage Site and describes it as “a symbol of reconciliation, international co-operation, and of the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious communities.”

“One of the main things that I learned in Abrašević is how important PLACES are for cities,” Katie Hampton (2007-2010) shares. “It’s like ‘a room of one’s own’ for urban spaces. It’s essential for Mostar to have an Abrašević. It’s essential for every city to have neutral urban spaces that encourage people to come together.

“I wrote this poem while the roof was leaking, and the rain was literally running on the floor. The theme is challenging divisions and lines, finding creative ways to live differently, to do impossible things—like the Mladi Most slogan, ‘a different Mostar is possible.’”

*On your floor, the rain charts
constellations; the drops form
in rivulets, recalling Neretva
that the city bobs upon, old tightrope walker
peering down on the thin line
that keeps him from death.
The child below sees in thin air-
impossibility. And yet, crossing a bridge,
imagines himself the tightrope walker
he could become, or perhaps
he could change lines on a map,
draw a moon shape over a green river
for men to walk across or dive off,
solving the tightrope’s dilemma.*

Building a bridge demands years of painstaking, dangerous labor. Once built, the structure unites simply by existing. Over



a young woman who had emerged from a childhood of war, who under normal circumstances as the head of her class would be well on her way toward a prestigious scholarship in some European country. A woman whose polite manner, demeanor, strength, and intelligence would all but guarantee a successful job in some business of international pursuit. But instead, her childhood was bombed. Literally bombed. Her school, along with her city, left dissected and ripped apart like so many frogs at the clumsy hands of pubescent biology lab students. Hers was a trajectory disrupted by tragedy. Yet here she was wonderfully, beautifully appalled by my apparent inability to “deeply appreciate and enjoy time.” I made it a

habit to jolt-slurp my espresso any time she was around after that. Her reaction was priceless. I am deeply grateful for our time and conversation over coffee, the stories she trusted me with, and for her devoted participation in some very controversial theater work that would at times spark fear and anxiety in a city that seemed at once ready to implode, explode, and who-knows-what-plode.

Much of this, of course, was in my mind but not necessarily in hers. Just as the “extremely/kind-of” paradox can be nullified through the sheer, constant process of normalization (if it’s normal it can’t be a paradox, right?) so too can reality and emotion be fused—the inventor and invented become indiscernible. I doubt she would ever allow herself to be labeled a victim of circumstance, or to necessarily subscribe to my drama-fueled language of the circumstances and events of those times. So to give her a voice in my attempt to articulate mine, here is a poem she wrote as part of a community-based, devised theater piece we created during a summer camp. It is a poem about moments and relationships that had particular meaning during a time of war:

*During the shelling of the town,
we had been sitting
in the basement and we haven’t
seen a single spot of light
in the dark of the war. (We heard only
screams, grenades, and crying).
One of my friends took a guitar and
started to play.
We sang so loud that we did not hear
the noise,
grenades,
screams.*

*This was the bright light that
we felt at least for a moment,
it helped us forget everything
that was happening.*

As to that parade of consequences, if you happen to pass through Mostar you’ll find it’s still going on. It’s not occupying every street at all hours of the day as it was then, but if you take a moment to walk beyond the glamour of the reconstructed Stari Most and listen carefully, you’ll hear the melancholic marching band still blowing out its turgid anthem to a city divided. 

Scot McElvany was a BVS volunteer in Mostar from 1996 to 1998.

“IT FEELS LIKE THE END OF AN ERA FOR BVS IN EUROPE,” FLORY SAYS. “IT MAKES SENSE, BUT AFTER 40-PLUS BVSers SERVING IN ALMOST 30 DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS IN CROATIA, SERBIA, KOSOVO, AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA SINCE 1992, IT MAKES ME VERY SAD.”



Stephanie Barras (left) with Tina Ćorić

Volunteers in Mostar

Mladi Most

Monica Honn (now Goletiani), 1995-1996
 Alice Blair, summer of 1995
 Scot McElvany, 1996-1998
 Tamiko Horner (now Rothhorn) and
 MC Roth (now Rothhorn), 1998-1999
*Ex-BVser Michael Szporluk served as
 interim coordinator, 1998-1999*
 Frank Klein, 1999-2000
 Sarah Merola, 2002-2004
 Rebecca Blocksme, 2002-2004
 Lauren Eby (now Eby Clemens), 2004-2005
 Robyn Holl (now Holl Gavigan), 2004-2007
 when Mladi Most merged into OKC Abrašević

OKC Abrašević

Katie Hampton, 2007-2010
 Samantha Lyon-Hill, 2011-2013
 Stephanie Barras, 2013-2016
 Rebecca Neiman, 2016-2018

the years, Mostar volunteers struggled with this.

“I still find myself sometimes unwilling to truly listen and be present, and instead start thinking about a gazillion other things I could be doing instead of sitting and drinking a tea or coffee,” Stephanie Barras (2013-2016) reflected during her final year. “But . . . I am becoming more accepting of the fact that it is a part of the culture. So I find myself struggling to balance my desire to constantly be doing something, with relaxing and simply being.”

“One of the BVSers asked me multiple times at the beginning if she could change placements, because she thought she wasn’t really doing anything,” Flory remembers. “Later, she wrote: ‘Another foreigner here gave me a great word of advice (literally, a word)—humility. In retrospect I can see how my early thoughts about the project and its people fell so far short of that attitude.’”

Rebecca Neiman (2016-2018) explains, “At Abrašević, I was constantly soaking up people’s stories, diversity, music, and quirks. I became accustomed to (even if not an expert in) slowing down, enjoying conversation and connection with others.

“Everyone talks about the importance of Abrašević as a space. For me, this space was made up of people, people I learned from every day:

Fatima taught me to speak.

Huso taught me to speak out.

*For what was right, what I believed in
 Nani taught me to work up a storm.*

Tina taught me how to be the calm in a storm.

Alina taught me to be tender and soulful.

Sandra taught me to be tough and get stuff done.

Anja taught me to love big, real big.

Roni taught me how to talk about big love.

Zeynep taught me how to enjoy the morning.

Debo taught me how to enjoy the sun—unabashedly.

Mili taught me about adjustment.

Miran taught me how to adjust the world to help others.

The end of an era

All BVS projects in the Balkans ended in 2018, due to budget constraints, visa complications, and changing trends in volunteerism.

“It feels like the end of an era for BVS in Europe,” Flory says. “It makes sense, but after 40-plus BVSers serving in almost 30 different organizations in Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1992, it makes me very sad. I won’t get to accompany more volunteers as they find their



way through the language and the culture as they “dive in” to this kind of placement or see them (from a distance) figure out how to float and fit in, to swim and eventually move on, enriched from all they’ve gained.”

“You could see such a transformation with so many of them,” Ćorić says of Mostar’s BVSers. “I always thought it was a good thing that they stayed for at least two years. . . . In my opinion this has been a very successful exchange. For

me it’s one line, based on that I’m able to see the whole picture. Seeing it as a long-term partnership that has been very great, very beneficial.”

There is still a need for bridges in Mostar. Ćorić elaborates, “In Mostar concretely there are institutional divisions. People go to separate schools, get electricity from separate providers, have their garbage picked up by separate people.”

A campaign she works on, for Mostar to become a 2024 European City of Culture, is titled “Everything Is BridgeAble.” 

Kristin Flory, BVS Europe coordinator, collected the stories for this article.

Know someone who would love to have life-changing experiences in Brethren Volunteer Service? Older adults are welcome! Browse opportunities at www.brethren.org/bvs/projects. Applications are open now.

“Then some people came, bringing to Jesus a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him...” Mark 2:3-4



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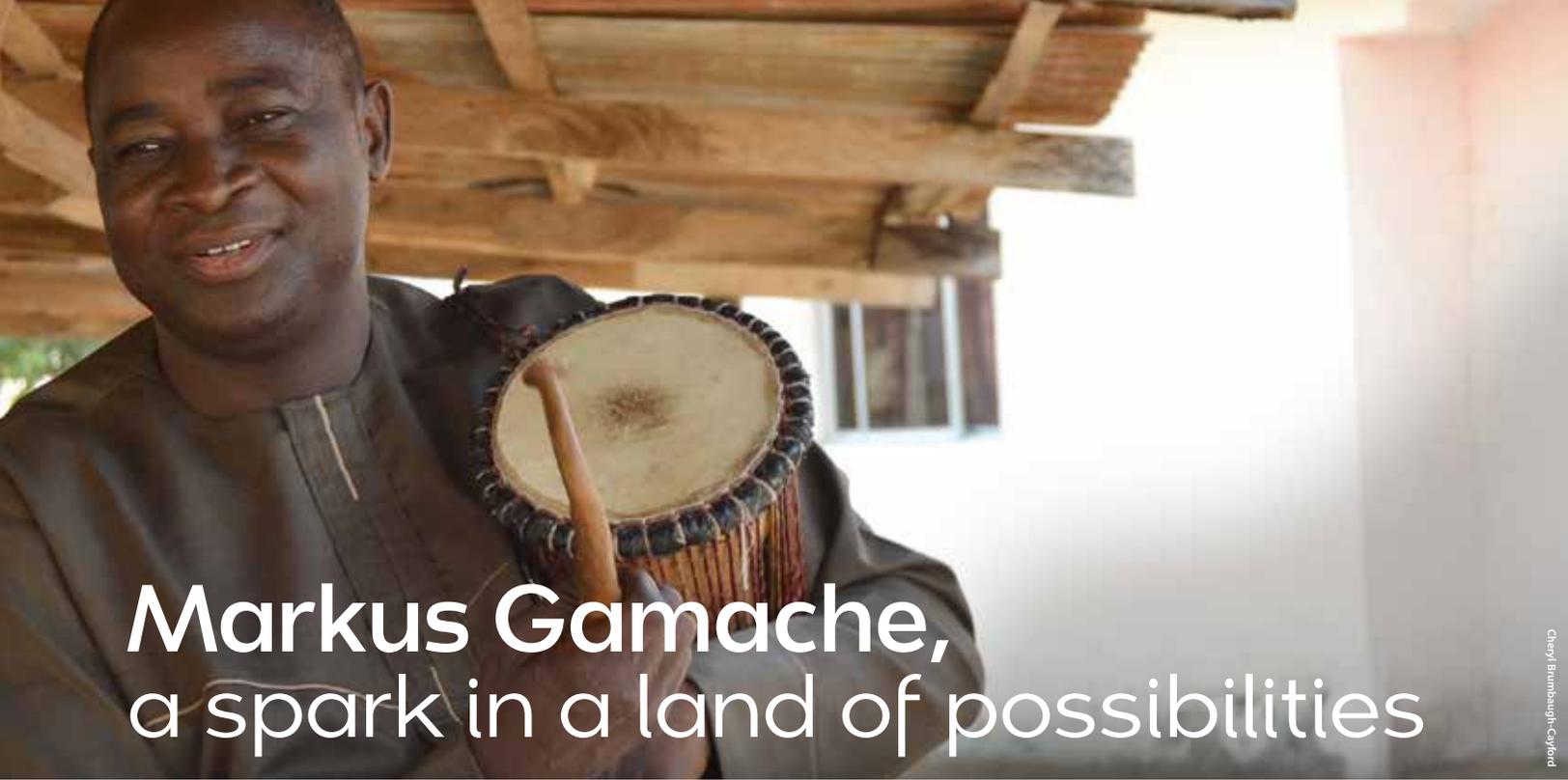
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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Coyford

Markus Gamache, a spark in a land of possibilities

by Pam Reist

When our plane landed in Abuja, Nigeria, an eager welcoming committee greeted my husband and me with infectious smiles, enthusiastic handshakes, and a promise from our host, Markus Gamache: “Nigeria is a land of possibilities.” Little did we know the fullness of what that promise would come to mean. The news that we received upon our arrival was that there was yet another bombing just the night before, and this one, in Maiduguri, killed 40 people. Many of our new friends, including Gamache, still had friends and family in that city in northeast Nigeria, and the news was heavy.

During our two-month “Sabbath rest” in Nigeria, we learned to know Gamache quite well. We were moved by his deep faith, playful sense of humor, profound gratitude, and unwavering integrity. In this “land of many possibilities” we were amazed at his ability to make things happen—even in the midst of unthinkable violence and corruption. While the needs in Nigeria are overwhelming, his vision is a catalyst for peace and he is making a difference.

It became apparent that from his birth, Gamache was being prepared to be a

peacemaker in a land he loves, among people he loves. He was born in Adamawa State, where families were Christian, Muslim, or practiced traditional religions. His earliest years were at home, where neither of his parents practiced a formal religion. When he was seven, he attended the village primary school. There, children were typical children, and played with each other regardless of religion. Other than the characteristic childhood antics, they lived, studied, and played side-by-side in this interfaith village, as many did in that part of the world.

His first teacher was Muslim, and he and his classmates learned that it wasn’t unusual for students to be whipped if they made mistakes or did not complete their lessons in Arabic and reading the Koran. Both emotional and physical abuse were common.

Just a few years later, the students’ world changed when a new teacher arrived. Thomas Ndawaka was Christian and he put the whip away. Not only did he become a beloved teacher of his students, he became a lifelong mentor for Gamache. A product of a church and mission school of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a

Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), Ndawaka’s deep faith and peaceful example spoke volumes to his students. The Brethren core values of tolerance, inclusion, peacemaking, and service were foundational. In class, he shared promise- and hope-filled stories from the Bible. At the age of 10, due in large part to Ndawaka’s influence and an invitation from the Holy Spirit, Gamache became Christian and was baptized. Even though his father became Muslim a few years later, the faith that was nurtured and modeled by his teacher had taken root . . . and grown deep.

Fast forward a few decades. The Muslim-Christian conflict in Nigeria continued to escalate and in 2010, Gamache began to dream of a land of possibilities where all had enough and none had too much, where Muslims and Christians



Courtesy of Pam Reist

Markus Gamache (left) with his teacher and mentor Thomas Ndawaka.

could again live side-by-side in peace.

Then Boko Haram began to wreak havoc. This Islamist extremist group murdered thousands, plundered and torched homes, schools, and churches, and destroyed entire villages. By the time the insurgency hit its height in October 2014, Nigeria was in crisis. People fled the northeast to refugee camps across the border in Cameroon or in Chad, camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) in other parts of Nigeria, or relied on the hospitality of friends and family in safer regions. At one time, Gamache and his wife, Janada, hosted 60 family members and friends in their modest home in Jos.

Something had to be done. That is when Gamache's dream became a reality and the Gurku Interfaith IDP Camp was conceived. On land purchased near Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, he founded an IDP camp different than any other. Because of his early teaching and now deeply held belief that Christians and Muslims can live side-by-side peacefully, this camp—now a village—is half Muslim and half Christian. Not only has housing been equitably granted, but both a Christian church and a Muslim mosque have been in the plans from the very beginning. Gurku is administered by the NGO (non-governmental organization) Lifeline Compassionate Global Initiative where Gamache serves as chairperson, Binta Bakari, a Muslim woman, is treasurer, and the board of directors includes both Christians and Muslims. Interfaith living and dialogue are intentional at every level of the camp, and in everyday living in an effort for peace and unity.

Gurku has 89 homes and is growing. There is an additional section for 40 or more homes for widows, which serves as a community within a community as the women draw support and encouragement from one another. The camp has a primary school where—once again—Christian and Muslim children learn and play side-by-side. There is a Montessori preschool, a clinic, several small stores, a cell-phone/battery charging booth, and more facilities for the use of residents. A sense of community, care for property, and respect for neighbors—regardless of religious beliefs—seem to rule the day.

Gurku is providing ways for people to not only feed their families but also to earn a living, with enough income to pay for education for their children. Women are up at the crack of dawn to tend their small farming plots. The possibilities for good harvests have increased exponentially with the gift of a tractor and implements from the Church of the Brethren in the United States in 2017. Residents say that the ground is “soft” because it is better tilled to receive seed. Plant emergence has increased with the tractor and residents can farm far larger fields.

Some Gurku residents manage the chicken houses that produce dozens and dozens of eggs daily. Perhaps most innovative of all are the fish “farms” where catfish are raised to provide food and income.

Gurku demonstrates the possibilities of living in interfaith community, where peace and unity and cooperation make a difference. Not only does Gurku meet the pressing needs of the present for many, most poignant is the sense of hope

it provides for the future, for Muslims and Christians alike. Many people who have lost so much find here the reality of a land of possibilities, learning life skills for today, paired with education for the next generation.

About the same time that Gamache graduated from primary school, his teacher, Ndawaka, moved away. Even so, they have remained close over the years, visiting one another whenever and wherever possible. Gamache credits Ndawaka's inspiration and influence in helping him to remain hope-filled in the face of severe adversity. “The primary teacher knows everything!” he says. There is no doubt that Ndawaka continues to serve as his spiritual guide and mentor.

For Ndawaka and his influence, Gamache rejoices and resoundingly proclaims, “To God be the glory!” 

Pam Reist is a pastor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. She has served on the Mission and Ministry Board, where she was a member of the executive committee.

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Where is Christianity headed?

The view from 2019

by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

(RNS)—**As we settle in to this new year, the world is becoming more religious, not less.** Faith from diverse traditions grows as population expands throughout most of the Global South. Last year, nearly 50 million more Christians were added in Africa, making it the continent with the most adherents to Christianity in the world, 631 million.

In the US, a narrative of religious decline and growing secularism is now culturally popular. The percentage of “nones”—those claiming no religious affiliation—is growing, particularly among millennials. But what are the deeper trends and challenges, beneath the headlines, that are likely to shape the future of faith?

White US congregations are withering. From 1991 to 2014, the number of white Protestants declined by a third, a trend that will continue as they age: Though 20 percent of Americans are 18 to 34 years of age, only 1 in 10 white Protestant congregations reflects that in their attendance. As a result, more than half of US congregations now have fewer than 100 members. Hundreds will close this year.

Where there is growth in American Christian denominations, it is driven mostly by nonwhites, whether Catholic or Protestant, evangelical or mainline. Over the past half-century, 71 percent of growth in Catholicism, for instance, has come from its Hispanic community. In the Assemblies of God, one of the few US denominations to show overall growth, white membership slightly declined while nonwhite membership increased by 43 percent over 10 years.

Multiracial congregations are also expanding to draw 1 in 5 churchgoing Americans, and surveys report a higher level of spiritual vitality among them compared with racially homogeneous congregations.

Globally, thanks to dramatic geographic and demographic changes, Christianity is recentering its footprint and becoming a non-Western religion. For 400 years, the faith has been molded by the largely European culture that came out of the Enlightenment. But today its vitality is coming from emerging expres-

sions of Christianity in Africa as well as in Asia and Latin America.

These new influences are raising new questions about the relationship of the individual to the community, rational versus nonrational pathways to perceiving truth, and the interplay of the spiritual and material realms.

As the yearning for authentic spiritual experience moves from the head to the heart in this new environment, spirit-filled communities are flourishing. Today, one of four Christians in the world identifies as Pentecostal or charismatic, with Pentecostalism growing at roughly four times the rate of the world’s population itself.

The popular image of Pentecostals as television preachers extolling a prosperity gospel and flitting around on private jets obscures the real causes for much of the movement’s explosive growth: small Pentecostal communities among the marginalized in the Global South that are providing empowerment and social transformation.

In wealthy Western countries, a strong spiritual driver is the visible impact of climate change. After centuries of a Western Christian cosmology that empties the material world of spiritual value, care of creation is becoming a foundation of Christian faith and practice, as Pope Francis proclaimed in his prophetic encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Saving the earth has become a spiritual calling.

But the West, particularly the US, has to open its eyes to startling developments in the rest of the world.

In the eyes of the global church, politics has undermined the integrity of Christian witness in America. Most non-American church leaders can’t believe the public support given to the president by some US church leaders and cannot understand the deafening silence of others.

The president’s own statements have scandalized the non-Western church, as he has denigrated African nations and proclaimed an “America first” policy that sounds in many places like a theological heresy that puts the Bible second.



Gehennodix by Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956)



In *Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century* (Fortress Press, 2018), Wesley Granberg-Michaelson identifies today's major shift in world Christianity and focuses on how US congregations are challenged to change at this watershed moment in history. *Future Faith* was named Book of the Year by Ecumenical News and is available from Brethren Press.

American Christianity across all traditions faces the imperative of de-Americanizing its witness if it is to have any global integrity. The world won't give any credibility to versions of the gospel that baptize American power, wealth, and global reach with notions of spiritual blessing.

It is also essential to confront culture wars in the church at home and abroad. The division in the church over ethical understandings of sexuality will persist for decades, since no action of a denominational general conference, synod, assembly, or council will change the sexual orientation of its members. While the church in the Global South mostly holds to strong conservative views on this matter, diversity also exists there and will slowly grow.

The key question ahead is whether the core of the gospel is declared to be at stake in these differences over same-gender covenanted partnerships, and divide us, or whether they will be seen as ethical and pastoral challenges that should not undercut the unifying call to follow Christ's mission in the world.

Meanwhile, "belonging before believing" is reshaping pathways of discipleship. The thirst for authentic community, evident in the appeal of Taizé to young people and countless other small initiatives, demonstrates a need to rethink how we welcome others into our faith or tradition. The demand that outsiders first adhere to specific beliefs expressed in creeds or confessions is giving way to inviting them first to

explore and share in worship, reflection, and service. Eventually this will alter traditional ecclesiology and understandings of discipleship.

If there is a theme in what lies ahead for the church, it is that the white Western Christian bubble that has powerfully shaped Christianity for the past four centuries is now beginning to burst. Future expressions of Christian faith will be shaped by its interactions with non-Western and nonwhite cultures. This will present challenges to the established church in the US but may hold the keys to its revitalization. 

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson is a well-known speaker and writer, and a consultant for congregations and worldwide ecumenical organizations. He served 17 years as general secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

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—Ephesians 3:16-20 (MSG)

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YAC 2018 photos by Renee Neher and Traci Rabenstein

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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Wendy McFadden



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Leading by listening

An interview with David Steele by Emmett Witkovsky-Eldred

The meandering journey that led David Steele into ministry almost sounds like something from the Bible. Like many favorite Bible stories, this one involves nudges from God and neighbor met with reluctance, until God’s call finally became too loud to ignore. Along the way, there is love, there is labor, and there is music. Steele found himself general secretary of the Church of the Brethren not exactly by accident, but not through his own design, either. He aims to lead by listening; he became a leader by hearing.

Steele’s interest in the Church of the Brethren took root as a youth at Martinsburg Memorial Church of the Brethren in Middle Pennsylvania District. Most significant was music and music leadership.

“I just have always loved music. That is just a part of who I am,” Steele says. He loved singing, though it wasn’t until high school that he picked up his grandmother’s old guitar.

“I was a John Denver fan; I still am. That style of music was something I really liked and resonated with. I would

watch him playing to pick up his style.” Today, Steele has two guitars sitting in his Elgin, Ill., office, though he admits he doesn’t play nearly enough.

“Music is a place where I can lose myself for a while and reconnect.”

In high school, Steele received several calls to ministry. He was grateful, but he tucked them away. He struggles to name what mentors saw in him. Finally, he musters up one quality: “I was a relational person, and somebody who was a good listener.”

But he wasn’t ready to listen to those calls. He enrolled at the Altoona campus of Penn State University, intending to study agriculture, before transferring to McPherson (Kan.) College. There, Steele and others formed the Brethren Identity Group, an organization for Brethren peers to fellowship, worship, and learn about being Brethren.

“We felt a strong connection to the Church of the Brethren and its values,” Steele says. “We felt a desire to be in community. As college students, we were living very simply and we felt there was something more to that. And

for peace witness. I had registered as a conscientious objector.”

At McPherson, Steele met Sarah Baile, his future wife. They married soon after graduating and moved to her hometown in Missouri. They committed to spend three years working the family farm, to test if he saw a future in farming. He was nurtured by mentors at Warrensburg Church of the Brethren who nudged him toward ministry, and he dabbled in preaching.

For most of Steele’s life, God has spoken through the gentle nudges by people around him. Except for “one day out in the hot hay field,” in his final year of farming. He describes a voice from heaven, a sudden understanding to pursue ministry. He decided to enroll in Bethany Theological Seminary. The path didn’t stop winding from there: his life of ministry has taken him to Oak Brook, Ill., to Bakersfield, Calif., and to central Pennsylvania, as a seminarian, camp program director, pastor, youth leader, and district executive for Middle Pennsylvania District. Central, as always, was his knack for listening.

Steele readily admits that his gift isn't overflowing charisma or energy. While he doesn't struggle in front of people, he doesn't thrive there, either. He can't speak off the cuff with eloquence or flair. He chooses his words cautiously, aiming to be diplomatic rather than stirring. He can come across as reserved, even calculating. His strength is a listening ear that invites more input and expression than he is likely to reciprocate with. He bears himself with a "non-anxious" presence, inspiring confidence not by rousing it with passion but by earning it with respectfulness and reliability.

Steele believes those gifts earned him the nomination to serve the denomination as Annual Conference moderator in 2015.

"It wasn't something that I was thinking about. I had actually declined two previous nominations because of timing. For me, it was really that sense of 'God, you're trying to tell me something and I've been ignoring it.'" What he heard from God was an invitation to step into denominational leadership at a key moment of division, as a listener, not a fixer.

"It's about coming into a situation and truly listening. It's about active listening. Not trying to provide answers or solutions, but trying to be empathetic. It's really not about fixing the problem, but about finding the common threads and themes that we can agree on."

Soon after Steele concluded his term as moderator, he served on the search committee for the next general secretary. The committee asked him to resign so that he could be considered as a candidate. Once again, Steele received a call that he hadn't asked or angled for.

"It was not something I was looking for. But through the call and encouragement of others, I really considered it following God's leading." He adds, "They saw the way I related to the church and related in situations and tough conversations about who we are as a church. My non-anxious presence would have been high on what they were

searching for in a denominational leader."

Steele is clear-eyed and candid about the struggles before the denomination: membership is dwindling and churches are closing, division could prove irreconcilable and destructive. Yet, the hardest part has been putting 600 miles between himself and his family: his wife, Sarah, and his adult daughters Abby and Aubrey, who has Down Syndrome. It came down to obeying God while doing what was best for Aubrey.

"Aubrey had found a niche in which she had a good job and loves what she does. Her routine was important, and we made that a priority. We were told 'you won't be able to find here [in Elgin] what you have there,'" says Steele. "Clearly, it's not been easy, and Sarah sees this as part of her commitment and sacrifice for the church. But Aubrey continues to thrive in what she's doing. I've talked a lot in the life of the church about Aubrey and the life lessons that we've learned from her: unconditional love and a deep appreciation for family. She celebrates when we're all together. She'll look

around and say, 'one big happy family.'"

Reflecting on a lifetime of ministry, Steele focuses on obedience to God's calling as the central ambition of his career. His life's work rests on his willingness to listen: to God, to family, to colleagues, and to the church.

"I like to think of myself as a team player. I have a 'systems style' of leadership, understanding that throwing a pebble into a pond is never just that: it's the ripples that that act creates in the life of the church. I've always been attuned to that.

"I love being out in congregations and meeting with people to hear about what they're working on—their passions, their deep lament about what's going on in the church. I follow God's call, obviously through prayer, but also by trying to tune in to all that's going on around me. Most of that nudging forward has come through the voices of others." 

Emmett Witkovsky-Eldred is assistant in the Youth and Young Adult Office of the Church of the Brethren. He is serving through Brethren Volunteer Service.

Stories from the border

by Leslie Sperry

Elisa is a US citizen who lives next to the bus station by the bridge that crosses the border. We accompanied her across into Mexico. She crosses several times each week and takes with her a large duffel bag filled with supplies that the migrants who are waiting to enter the US might need. The bag holds supplies such as

water, snacks, and baby supplies, to minister to their immediate needs. She stopped to talk to the migrants who were waiting, to offer them support and hope. She was also on the lookout for changes in the policies aimed to keep the waiting migrants out of sight. She is a founding member of the Angry Tías and Abuelas (Angry Aunts and Grandmothers). She got started when

ICE dropped off a lone woman at the bus station very late one night, at a time when it is not safe to be there. The bus station manager called Elisa to help because she lived close by. Elisa helped find lodging for the woman that night. And seeing a need, she got her friends to help, and they got their friends to help. That group became the Angry Tías and Abuelas. Elisa told us quite nonchalantly, "If we want a better world, we just have to step up."

■■■
I was serving *agua* (water) at the Migrant Respite Center in McAllen, Texas. A man and his son, who was about 10 or 11 years old, sat down at the table. The boy was shaking uncontrollably and could not stop. His father was quite concerned and explained that they had been detained by ICE for five days in a facility that was extremely cold. The mylar blankets that ICE provided were pretty much useless. My heart went out to both of them. Fortunately, the respite center had some medicines and helped the son. A few minutes later, after eating some warm soup, the lad was no longer shaking.

At the end of a long and very busy day at the respite center, I sat down to take a short break near the line that was



Beacon Heights group at border

queuing for a change of clothes. Most migrants show up with only the clothes they are wearing and not much else. Near me was a mother who could not have weighed more than 100 pounds. She had a very heavy baby sleeping in her arms, and I offered to hold him while she went through the line. (That's what *abuelas* do.) He was truly a beautiful angel. As I was sitting there holding him, I couldn't help but wonder: How far had the mother come? Did she walk all the way? Was she by herself with the baby? How could she cross the river? And most importantly, what will she face now in the United States at this time?

On the exterior of the Migrant Respite Center a sign reads, "Creating a world where immigrants, refugees, migrants, and people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome, and belonging."



Sister Norma Pimentel is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Last May, she received the University of Notre Dame's 2018 Laetare Medal, the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics. Even the head of the border patrol



Sister Norma Pimentel

CNS/Barbara Johnston, courtesy of Notre Dame University



Historic La Lomita Chapel (green circle on map) will have access cut off once the next section of wall (red line) is built later this year. Various properties and wildlife areas located between the route of the wall and the Rio Grande (yellow line) will be similarly affected.

for the region praises her for the work she does and the way she lives her faith. She grew up in the Rio Grande Valley and loves the vibrancy of the culture in that area. She says, “The families arriving at the Sacred Heart Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen all come with one thing in common—a high sense of hope and faith in God. Much like the Holy Family, these families were forced to flee because they feared for the lives of their children.

“I would tell the rest of the country that they need to come to the border,” she says, “to see and be part of what we are experiencing here, not to be misguided by what they hear others say about what’s happening here. They can get involved. They can come and get their own understanding of what the border is like, to see that it’s a safe place where we can experience God’s presence as we see the families seeking safety and protection.”

Sister Norma says, “Love has no borders.” I think she would say we need to work to find solutions rather than just contributing to the noise.



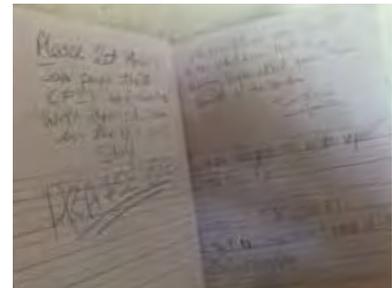
As the migrants who enter illegally are detained, the head of the family is forced to wear an ankle bracelet. ICE also takes their belts, shoe laces, and hair elastics. In order to change clothing, frequently pant legs are cut in order to get pants off over the ankle monitors. As migrants make their way to their sponsors by public transportation, wearing ankle monitors, they are perceived as criminals—just one more way to demean the immigrants.



La Lomita Chapel in Mission, Texas, is a historical landmark first built in 1865 and used as a mission center for the towns and ranches in Hidalgo County. It’s a sacred space and a religious shrine with special Palm Sunday

celebrations. It has a serene, park-like atmosphere. The chapel sits between the Rio Grande River and the levee constructed for flood control, where the border wall is to be built. Once the wall is built, the chapel access will be cut off.

Inside, the mission is simple, with a beautiful main altar and a very small side worship area. The real treasures for us were the two notebooks



filled with prayers of concern and praise, written in mixtures of Spanish and English. The page that touched us the most is shown here, with this prayer: “Please let Amy y Jose pass their CFI’s (Credible Fear Interview) and reunite with their children in the US and stay.”

Leslie Sperry is a member of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind. She was part of a group from the congregation that traveled to the US-Mexico border at the end of October 2018.

Children’s Disaster Services at the border

Last summer and fall, teams of Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers worked at the Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen while responding to the humanitarian crisis on the US-Mexico border. A first CDS team deployed to the area in late July 2018, serving more than 75 children on the first day and 790 in the first two weeks. More teams were sent in October and November.

Several times over its history CDS has responded to the humanitarian crisis of people displaced by violence in their countries and communities. CDS helped Lebanese Americans in 2006, Kosovo refugees in 1999, and internally displaced people (IDPs) in Nigeria through the Healing Hearts program that started in 2016.

Highlights

AND THE BRETHREN

by Peggy Reiff Miller

Since its founding in 1946, generations of Brethren children and parents have looked forward to the monthly arrival of *Highlights for Children* magazine. Its tagline of “fun with a purpose” aligned closely with Brethren values, and still does today. That’s not surprising when you consider that the magazine’s cofounder, Dr. Garry C. Myers, was a born-and-bred member of the Church of the Brethren.

Garry Cleveland Myers was born in 1884 on a farm near Sylvan, Pa. His father, John A. Myers, was a founding member and elder of the Stone Bridge Church just across the state line in western Maryland.

At age 21, Garry Myers was called to the ministry by the Licking Creek congregation. His own calling, however, pulled him toward education and led him to a career through which his positive impact on children is still being felt today.



At Ursinus College near Philadelphia, Myers met his equal in a Pennsylvania farm girl from the Poconos. He married Caroline Elizabeth Clark in 1912, after obtaining his Ph.D. in child psychology at Columbia College in New York City. From 1912 to 1914, Myers taught history and social science at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.

Far ahead of their times in many ways, this gifted duo went on to become experts in child psychology, education, and parenting. Treating children as the world’s most important people and allowing for their creativity was always uppermost in their minds. They used observations of their own children as a mini-lab of sorts, to the point where their four-year-old son Jack would look up from what he was doing and say, “Take a record.”

The dream

After a decade of teaching at what is now Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, the Myerses began contributing to and advising children’s periodicals. In 1935, Garry became editor-in-chief of the newly created *Children’s Activities* magazine. Caroline became associate editor. The publication became known to the educational department of the Church of the Brethren, including peace education representative Dan West.

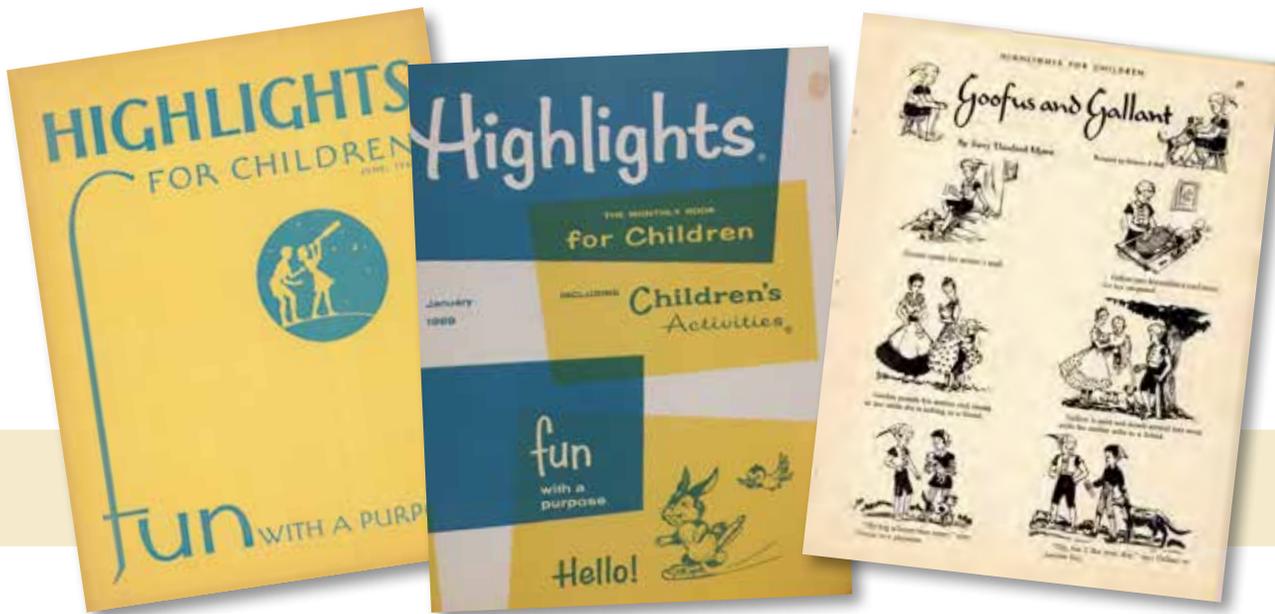
In great demand as speakers, the Myerses left their positions at Case Western in 1940 and began traveling

and lecturing around the country for the magazine’s publisher, the Child Training Association. Being on the road so much gave the couple abundant time to talk. “What we used to talk about,” Caroline told her granddaughter, Pat Myers Mikeson, *Highlights* historian, “is what we would do if that magazine were ours. What we would change. What we wanted to say to children. What we wanted in it and what we didn’t want in it.”

Garry and Caroline Myers became increasingly disillusioned with the publisher’s inclusion of things they didn’t find edifying for children, such as pre-formed shapes to cut out or color, which didn’t encourage creativity, and third-party advertising directed at both children and their parents. They began to talk with others about their dream.

On March 25, 1946, as they were going on stage for a presentation in Bradford, Pa., they received a telegram from their publisher saying, “Information of your proposed publication venture has reached me.” He demanded their resignation March 31 if true, and if not to “present proof at once.” Suddenly, at ages 61 and 58, they were on their own.

It didn’t take them long to regroup. The first issue of *Highlights for Children* was published in June 1946. Paper was scarce following World War II, and they set up business offices in Columbus, Ohio, near a printer they found that had an ample supply. Instead of moving to



Columbus, however, the Myers family moved to Caroline's family homestead in Boyds Mills, Pa., where they had often summered, and set up editorial offices above a car dealership in nearby Honesdale.

Word of this development reached Dan West, who wrote on Feb. 17, 1947:

"Dear Brother Myers:

"I heard some bad news, which may be good news, to the effect that because the official policy of *Children's Activities* is too warm toward war meanings, you split up with them. Miss Ruth Shriver gave me the name of the new publication, *Highlights for Children*, to which we should like to subscribe."

Garry responded: "The reason you name was one of several reasons for our leaving 'Children's Activities' and founding HIGHLIGHTS FOR CHILDREN."

According to *The Highlights Way*, a book published by Highlights in 2014, the very first issue of the magazine "had a drawing showing missiles, grenades, gas masks, and machine guns falling into a great cauldron and being forged into farming and gardening tools—along with a biblical quotation, 'And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.'"

Goofus and Gallant

West also inquired about the Goofus and Gallant feature that Garry Myers had created for *Children's Activities*. Fictional twin Goofus' conduct was

selfish and thoughtless, Gallant's gentle and caring. "Your Goofus and Gallant articles," West wrote, "were very warmly welcomed by our youngsters. I wonder if you were allowed to take them along with you or whether that is the property of *Children's Activities*. I hope that they are still your brain children."

West went on to propose an idea: using the characters "to carry appropriate messages toward effective peace education on film strip and in third dimension [via True-View viewers]."

Garry's response: "The situation concerning 'Goofus and Gallant' is rather curious. We are advised legally that 'Children's Activities' cannot use the names and that we should not for a year or so. I don't see why other characters could not be invented to carry out the fine purpose you have in mind."

The Highlights philosophy

Although Goofus and Gallant never appeared in Brethren educational materials, they did make it into *Highlights for Children* in 1948 and remain a regular feature to this day. In talking about the moral and spiritual values of the magazine, *The Highlights Way* says it is "telling that Goofus and Gallant . . . make up one of the brand's most beloved features."

Pat Myers Mikelson says, "My grandfather was a deeply religious person in a spiritual sense. I believe that his Brethren upbringing influenced very

greatly his philosophy that became the foundation of Highlights. He was a man of great moral character and had a great respect for childhood, for women, for all persons no matter what their differences, and also a deep belief in the brotherhood of man."

The philosophy and values set forth by Garry and Caroline Myers continue to be carried out by the fourth generation of the Myers family, who now lead a much-expanded Highlights company. This philosophy is summarized in a dedication for the magazine written in 1960 by Garry and Caroline and their son Garry, Jr. With one small edit, the dedication appears in the magazine to this day:

This book [magazine] of wholesome fun is dedicated to helping children grow
 in basic skills and knowledge
 in creativeness
 in ability to think and reason
 in sensitivity to others
 in high ideals and worthy ways of living—
 for CHILDREN are the world's most important people. 

Peggy Reiff Miller is a writer and historian living in Englewood, Ohio. Author of *The Seagoing Cowboy* (Brethren Press), she is currently working on a book about the first decade of Heifer Project.



ANTICIPATING ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A SEASON FOR RENEWAL

by Donita J. Keister

As I'm learning to know Brethren across the country in my role as moderator, it is my joy to find at least one area of widespread agreement: We all desire renewal for our beloved denomination, renewal of a sacred community that is continuing the work of Jesus Christ with effectiveness and fervor.

Annual Conference is meant to be that place where we anticipate renewal of our relationships with one another and renewal of our mission as a denomination. This year as we turn from the usual business agenda to discernment of a compelling vision, there is a heightened sense of anticipation. Will our work lead to true renewal of our life together, or will it be just another exercise leading to the same old place with the same old problems of division and strife?

This compelling vision process is a spiritual journey that this body of Christ must walk together. Renewal will not come from some external process or smart set of questions. Renewal will be born out of hearts yielded to the moving of God's Spirit. Are we willing to risk a movement of God that is not yet evident, not yet imagined?

In Luke 5:36-38, Jesus tells a parable about the preparation of heart required for renewal:

"No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts

new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins."

While Jesus' initial intention was most likely to address the fallacy of trying to fit his new ways of grace into the old ways of the law, I believe this parable also speaks to us about a place of ongoing transformation, wherein we walk in newness in Christ, both as individuals and as the gathered body.

If Jesus is going to do a new work among us, each of us bears responsibility for preparing ourselves to participate in that new work. Will we come to Annual Conference prepared to accept a new garment to replace the torn and tattered one? Will we come having readied our spirits as new wineskins to receive the fresh wine of the Spirit's energy and vision?

New garment replacing the old. We are a torn and broken people. The garment of our relationship is riddled by the carelessness of pride and thorns of contempt. It is threadbare in many areas where old methods of ministry have become ineffective.

Releasing this old garment will feel hard as we each cling to our favorite area of its familiar comfort. If we try to take a patch of new to repair the old, we will thwart God's plan for renewal. If each one's personal design for the garment is a

THE GARMENT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP IS RIDDLED BY THE CARELESSNESS OF PRIDE AND THORNS OF CONTEMPT. IT IS THREADBARE IN MANY AREAS WHERE OLD METHODS OF MINISTRY HAVE BECOME INEFFECTIVE. . . . WILL WE HAVE THE GENUINE HUMILITY, COMPASSION, LOVE, AND FORGIVENESS REQUIRED TO LEAVE THE OLD BEHIND AND EMBRACE THE NEW?



priority, we will not be able to see and embrace the design God is revealing through the gathered body. Can we each give up our pride, contempt, and comfort? Will we have the genuine humility, compassion, love, and forgiveness required to leave the old behind and embrace the new?

New skins for new wine. A little research on wineskins tells me the death of a sheep or goat is necessary. The skin must be tanned with oils to make it supple and flexible. It's then sewn to form a pouch and sealed to hold liquid.

When I prepare my spirit as a new wineskin, first I need to die to self, giving up my personal agendas and desires. The tanning oils of God's Word ready my heart to be supple and flexible, preparing me to listen to the voices of others with love, understanding, and grace, even as I stand lovingly and firmly on the foundational convictions of my faith. I sew the skin together with the thread of the Holy Spirit through fervent prayer, which binds all things in Christ. I must be open to how that same Holy Spirit, working uniquely within each one, will bind us together, stretching us, the body of Christ, so we are ready to receive God's vision for us.

Throughout this past fall and winter, about two thousand people have come together in districts to talk about what it means to be part of the Church of the Brethren. What are the common things that excite us about serving Christ? What are our concerns and frustrations? How might we move forward beyond division? In the 9 districts and 16 conversations that I led, some people expressed excitement and were encouraged; others were disappointed and frustrated.

I'm grateful for all who were able to participate in these district gatherings, which prepare us for deeper discussions at Annual Conference. I hope that all participants learned something new about themselves, about the others who shared conversation with them, and about the difficult task of renewal before us. I ask for your commitment to do what is necessary to prepare the cloth and new wineskins required for the conversations in Greensboro to occur with love and grace.

That preparation is primarily spiritual. You can be strengthened through the weekly focus on the "COB Compelling Vision Spiritual Connection" Facebook page, a

prayer calendar coming this spring, and the spiritual preparation and prayer that will be part of district delegate briefings.

At Annual Conference we will delve into the sometimes difficult, sometimes frustrating, sometimes inspiring conversations around repairing what is torn and making new wine for the years to come. Delegates will be seated at round tables as usual, but this year non-delegates can register to sit at a table too. Through iPads at each table, table answers will be recorded immediately to a database for fast reporting.

In addition to the usual evening worship services, Annual Conference will have a time of worship and preaching each morning and a time of Bible study each afternoon. There will be additional Bible studies during insight sessions.

After spending many hours in conversations around our tables building community with one another, the gathered body will celebrate our life together and the hope we share in Christ with love feast during the closing business session on Saturday afternoon. This will be the first time that we will hold love feast at Annual Conference in more than 150 years, after it was discontinued because of the large number of people attending. Those planning this Conference pray that all will anticipate this service with a heart well prepared for God's moving in our midst.

When we focus on the proclamation of Christ in his fullness as revealed in scripture, we will be driven with passion for the work of his kingdom, enabling the church to flourish. Come to Annual Conference prepared for a new garment and new wineskins for storing the fresh wine of the Spirit.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, NIV). 

Donita J. Keister is moderator of the 2019 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.



It's not my place to judge?

by Tim Harvey

What would congregational life look like if our commitment to Christ and to one another were strong enough that we could gracefully challenge difficult behavior without fearing that people would leave the church?

You don't have to be involved in a congregation very long before you'll hear the phrase "It's not my place to judge." When people say this, they are likely remembering Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged." And yet, we are aware of times when sisters and brothers say or do things that are hurtful to others or make choices that seem out of character with their faith commitment. Situations like these present a difficult challenge: Do we avoid the issue by remaining silent, or do we find a way to engage our sister or brother, recognizing that times of spiritual difficulty can be opportunities to put our faith into practice?

To help consider these questions, take a moment and read Matthew 7:1-5 and 18:15-20.

'We are not to be hateful . . .'

Matthew 7:1 is quite clear: it is not our place to judge. Looking closely at the Greek word translated "judge" makes this point even clearer: "to judge" means "to distinguish, give preference . . . to speak or think ill of, to decide." Unhelpful, prejudicial attitudes are not to be found in our lives because we really aren't very consistent or fair when it comes to judging someone's actions. Even within our own congregations, how many times have we found ourselves giving people we're close to the benefit of the doubt, while presuming the worst about those we don't like?

What makes judging an even more serious issue is our tendency to place people into groups based on personal characteristics such as family, racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group and then evaluate them based on our generalized perception of that group instead of the facts of the situation. Duke Divinity School professor Christena Cleveland writes that "simply putting people into groups increases the likeli-

THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF FORGIVENESS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT ONLY FLOWS FROM GOD TO US; IT IS SOMETHING THAT SHOULD ALSO FLOW BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

hood that [we] will focus on the specific factor that divides [us] and disregard the more significant factors that unite [us]" (*Disunity in Christ*, 48).

We are much more likely to judge people harshly if we have labeled them as "other."

This tendency is ultimately a denial of the very grace that God offers to each of us. In his book *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Oswald Chambers says of this verse: "Which of us would dare stand before God and say, 'My God, judge me as I have judged other people'? We have judged others as sinners; if God had judged us like that we would be in hell. God judges us through the marvelous atonement of Jesus Christ" (79).

But all of this is only part of the answer to the initial questions posed above. Are Christians to remain silent in the face of another person's harmful behavior or actions? A closer consideration of our two scripture texts suggests the answer is "no."

' . . . but we are to be helpful'

One of the assumptions of Matthew 7:1-5 is that we are in fact aware of attitudes and actions within the church family that seem inconsistent with Christian behavior. All of us do things that are hurtful, questionable, or even stupid. How are we to repair the hurt that comes because of our continual struggle with sin?

I believe we misinterpret this passage because we stop with verses 1-2 and don't wrestle with what follows in verses 3-5. As he often does, Jesus uses a common metaphor to

explain a spiritual concept. Being a woodworker myself, it is easy for me to imagine that Jesus knew a thing or two about having a particularly stubborn speck of dust in his eye. Sometimes these situations require help from another person—but not from someone who can't see clearly because of what is in their own eye!

Reconciling harmful situations requires self-examination and repentance, practices that are a fundamental part of our life together and assume a certain level of involvement with one another. The giving and receiving of forgiveness is not something that only flows from God to us; it is something that should also flow between members of the congregation. Knowing our tendency to judge persons we perceive to be "different" more harshly ought to be a motivation to build deeper relationships in the body of Christ, not retreat into silence when there are obvious problems.

Jesus' oft-quoted (but perhaps under-practiced) instructions on conflict resolution from Matthew 18:15-20 remind us that it is possible to both name hurtful behavior and experience forgiveness, so long as our attitude is focused on bringing estranged people back into relationship. Pointing out the fault to another person is not by itself judgmental, even when it rises to the level of telling it to the church.

But it is fair to expect that those pointing out the fault in another are willing to make sure their own spiritual lives are in order. Mennonite scholar Myron Augsburger says it this way: "The refusal to be judgmental does not mean a refusal to be helpful. But helping one's brother at his point of need must be done with a spirit of grace and understanding" (*The Communicator's Commentary, Vol. 1*, p. 96).

In situations where we see the negative impacts of someone's attitudes or behavior, we might consider asking, "What do we do with the pain this situation is causing?" Matthew 7:1-5 assumes that we see a situation that at least appears to point to a problem but calls us to not be judgmental. Matthew 18:15-20 calls us to name sin in direct confrontation.

How do we balance these two instructions from Jesus? Do we say nothing, and leave the pain for someone else to carry? Or might it be that our relationships—at least those within our congregation—are strong enough that the inevitable occasions of spiritual difficulty become opportunities to put our faith into practice in ways that heal pain, reconcile relationships, encourage spiritual maturity, and bring glory to God? 

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

To learn more

- *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, by Christena Cleveland (IVP Books). A careful study of the divisions that happen when our labels for one another become more important than our identity in Christ.
- *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, by Oswald Chambers (Discovery House). A careful biblical and devotional study on Matthew chapters 5-7, derived from lessons first delivered in 1907.
- *To Judge or Not To Judge*, by Tim Harvey (Brethren Press). A monograph on Matthew 7:1-5 and the New Testament idea of admonishment, and how these might work in our lives today.

A new chapter

by Kelsey Murray

As I write this, I am wrapping up my first work week at the first full-time job I have held since being a member of Brethren Volunteer Service.

After I moved home to Pennsylvania from Elgin, Ill., where I filled the role of National Youth Conference coordinator, I began searching for a job in the area. For more than three months, I submitted applications and went through the interview process, speaking with potential employers and waiting for a call back over 10 times.

I began to feel discouraged, unconfident, and useless. I was frustrated, feeling like I was unable to find where God was calling me. I had just experienced the planning and coordinating of the 2018 National

Youth Conference and it had been a mountaintop experience of over 15 months.

And now, I was at home, struggling to find a job and the next step in my journey. As much as I loved being back home with my family, it was quite a change for me. In the midst of this transition, I found myself having a hard time adjusting.

Then, things seemed to fall into place. Finally, after all those applications, I accepted a position as an activities assistant in a nursing home's locked unit for dementia and end-of-life residents. Since I had never worked in a nursing home or with dementia patients, I felt like I was about to walk into a whole new world, and was ready to embark on a new adventure.

But, as I stepped into the nursing home on my first day, I knew my previous experiences of planning and ministry during BVS would be moments that I could draw from and that I could use to positively impact my patients and co-workers. I am still learning the names, quirks, and routines of my patients, but I can honestly say that I think God made me wait for a job for a reason. I believe that God wanted me in a position where I could share my skills and creativity to make a difference in my community. I know that I'm helping to make the lives of my residents a little brighter as I add more fun to their day and build relationships with them.

I see the work I am doing as a ministry. When we sing "Joy to the World" and I notice that residents who do not typically talk very much are singing every word, I know that the Spirit is moving and that God is working. When we hit a balloon around and residents who are mostly immobile or unresponsive are hitting the balloon with big smiles on their faces, I can't help but smile myself.

Some of my residents don't get many visitors or their families don't visit often, so I feel that I am filling that void for them. When I try to communicate with residents who have limited and declining skills, some days are harder than others. But I just remember they're human, and want to be cared for and treated with dignity and love.

I look forward to continuing to brighten the lives of my residents and I am so excited to see where this call leads me! 

Kelsey Murray, of Lancaster, Pa., served as coordinator of the 2018 Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference. This article first appeared in the Winter 2018-2019 issue of *The Volunteer*, a newsletter published by Brethren Volunteer Service.



BBT president signs letter about tax code

The president of Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT), Nevin Dulabaum, has signed a letter to Congressional leaders sent by chief executive officers of denominational benefit plans. The letter sent in late 2018 concerned two sections of the Internal Revenue Code, one with potential to restrict participation in church retirement income account plans, and the other with potential to impose a tax on church parking lots.

The letter was sent by an interfaith group representing Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faith traditions. The organizations provide retirement and health benefits to more than 1 million clergy and lay workers and their families.

The letter addressed a recent position taken by the Treasury Department and IRS to ban employees of certain church-affiliated organizations from participating in church retirement income account plans offered under section 403(b)(9) of the Internal Revenue Code. Employees of church-related nursing homes, daycares, camps, preschools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and other organizations would lose access to church-based plans.

The letter also raised concern about a new business



Cheryl Bunnbaugh-Cayford

income tax provision in section 512(a)(7) that would impose a tax on church parking lots.

The letter urged adoption of “well-vetted and bipartisan and bicameral” legislation introduced in the House and Senate that would make the necessary clarifications to both sections.

New theological focus at seminary is funded by AAAS grant

Bethany Theological Seminary is expanding educational opportunities at the intersection of theology and science through a \$75,000 grant awarded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The award was received through Science for Seminaries, an initiative of the association’s Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion. The goal is to support seminaries as they integrate science into theological education and demonstrate its relevance to the life of religious communities. Recipients commit to incorporating scientific topics and themes into core curricula and to hold at least one campus-wide event.

Bethany’s new grant-funded pro-

gram is “Binocular Vision: Seeing Life through Eyes of Faith and Science.” Russell Haitch, professor of theology and human science, and Nate Inglis, assistant professor of theological studies, prepared the grant proposal and are overseeing the program. Inglis learned about the grant in the summer of 2016 when he was selected to attend an AAAS Science for Seminaries Faculty Enrichment Retreat.

“I knew that it would be a great opportunity for Bethany and that our seminary would be a great candidate,” says Inglis. “A scientific worldview and a society that is increasingly integrated with technology characterize the world in which our students are called to serve. In this setting, a basic science lit-

eracy and critical reflection on how new technology impacts our lives are topics that need to become essential parts of seminary education.”

Haitch’s course “Ministry across Generations” has used psychology in preparing students to minister to people at various stages of life, but now will give more emphasis to neuroscience. In “Introduction to Theological Reflection,” Inglis will enhance student learning with comparison of theological and scientific methods and with the integration of relevant scientific fields.

Bethany will offer a public conference on the meeting of faith and science entitled “Looking at Life,” on April 25-27 in Richmond, Ind.



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Global Food Initiative supports agriculture-related projects

The Global Food Initiative of the Church of the Brethren made multiple grants at the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019. Grants support hurricane recovery for farmers in Puerto Rico, church-related community garden projects in the US and Spain, an orchard in Nigeria, a refrigeration project of Lybrook Community Ministries, and Brethren participation in a symposium in East Africa.

An allocation of \$51,605 provides long-term recovery support to **Puerto Rican farmers** who suffered damage to their farms during Hurricane Maria. The grant was recommended by the Puerto Rico District disaster response committee. The GFI manager has maintained close communication with Brethren Disaster Ministries to maintain coordination between the two programs.

Community gardens grants include \$15,000 for purchase of a used tractor for New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren's community garden, and \$4,455 supporting the community garden of the Gijon and Aviles congregations of Iglesia Evangelica de los Hermanos (the Church of the Brethren in Spain).

An allocation of \$5,260 supports installation of an orchard fence at the headquarters of **Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria** (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). The orchard is operated by agriculture staff working in EYN's Integrated Community Based Development Program.

An allocation of \$3,000 funds one complete solar and refrigeration unit for **Lybrook Community Ministries** in Cuba, N.M. Director Jim Therrien is seeking several partners for the project to install more units in the homes of

elderly members of the community who need refrigeration for medicines and families with young children who need refrigeration for milk and formula.

Three grants support attendance at an **ECHO East Africa Symposium** by Brethren from the Democratic Republic of Congo (\$2,990), representatives from Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS) in Burundi (\$2,490), and Brethren from Rwanda (\$1,830). The Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization symposium took place Feb. 12-14 in Tanzania.



Community garden of the Gijon and Aviles congregations in Spain.

Brethren Faith in Action Fund allocates grants

The Brethren Faith in Action Fund has allocated its first grants to congregations. The fund provides grants to outreach ministry projects of Church of the Brethren congregations that serve the community, strengthen the congregation, and expand the reign of God.

The fund was created by the Mission and Ministry Board with monies generated by the sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Ministries that receive grants will honor and continue the legacy of service that the center has epitomized, while also addressing the dynamics of the present age.

The fund is being managed to preserve principle. Investment performance and other factors will determine the amount of available grant money each year.

Five congregations received \$5,000 grants in 2018. Rockford (Ill.) Community Church received a grant to support its community outreach with a mobile tech and art lab. Alpha and Omega Church of the Brethren in Lancaster, Pa., received a grant for its 2018 outreach budget for a food bank, fall festival, day camp, 40-day outreach campaign, and video/Internet ministry. Sunnybrook Church of the Brethren in Bristol, Tenn., received a grant to support purchase of a radio station. Eglise des Freres Haitiens Church of the Brethren in Miami, Fla., received a grant for ministries that address basic human needs and evangelization to more than 350 families on a weekly basis. Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., received a grant to help replace aged and dilapidated playground equipment used by a preschool that is a ministry of the congregation.

A proposal

Here's a proposal for a minimal compelling vision.

Whereas there are many different theological points of view within the Church of the Brethren, therefore the following four points of action shall serve as the compelling vision for continuing to work together in peace:

1. To work toward elimination of homelessness by each congregation (or two, three, or more congregations jointly) providing funding for a place to live for at least one person or one family.

2. To work toward elimination of racism by means of each congregation contacting and maintaining a relationship with the local chapter of the NAACP, and asking what can be done to help, in addition to making regular contributions to the NAACP or the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF).

3. To work to alleviate suffering created as a result of disasters by regular

VOICES of CONSCIENCE:

Peace Witness in the Great War

Feb. 17 – March 31, 2019
Musselman Library
Bluffton University

A traveling exhibit remembering the witness of peace-minded people against the First World War 1914-18



*Underwriter:
The Friesen Family Legacy,
Jacob T. and Lola Friesen,
North Newton, Kan.*



For full event schedule, visit
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This exhibit was developed and is toured by Kauffman Museum at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. VoicesofConscienceExhibit.org



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LETTERS

support of Brethren Disaster Ministries via the Emergency Disaster Fund.

4. To work to alleviate hunger by regular support of the Global Food Initiative.

Charles Thomas
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Brethren Reminder

Thanks so much for "The Last Brethren Reminder" article in the December issue. The reminder is dear to my heart and I am grieving its death. I actually used that as my sermon title and devot-

ed a major part of the message to it last Sunday, Dec. 16.

Wayne Pence
Port Republic, Va.

Keeping us in touch

I want to express my appreciation for Wendy McFadden's poem "Expectations" and for MESSENGER and how it keeps us in touch with the larger church. MESSENGER lets us know our problems aren't unique, and even though we at Lakeview Church of the Brethren can't do a lot our little bit joins with other little

bits to do some truly beneficial projects.

I write a monthly column, "Simply Brethren," for our country paper, and have for more than 20 years. I do it to keep the town of Brethren on the map!

Janet Stroup
Brethren, Mich.

We help each other

Many thanks for "Will You Help Me?" in the November 2018 MESSENGER. May God bless you as we help each other.

Lucile Vaughn
Bridgewater, Va.

TURNINGPOINTS

Please send information to be included in 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.

Centenarians

Eller, Pauline, 100, Kokomo, Ind., Oct. 28
Livengood, Lois, 102, Dixon, Ill., Jan. 17
Luty, Dorothy, 102, Waynesboro, Pa., Oct. 17
Ridenour, Lillian, 100, Waynesboro, Pa., Sept. 21
Rust, Martha Jane, 101, Leo, Ind., July 8

New members

Agape, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Ashley Augustine, Joshua Augustine, Brandon Curry, Lydia Morris
Blue Ridge, Va.: Becky Arnold, Brandi Beckwith, David Beckwith, Jeff Cannon, Debbie Castillo, Erin Delp, Travis Delp, Harold Jones, Marie Jones, Kelly Maxwell, Clara Orange
Chambersburg, Pa.: Doris Demuth, Cinda Frey, Cynthia Miller
Crest Manor, South Bend, Ind.: Robin Fidler, Cindy Haag, Dorothy Haag, Max Haag, Rene' Hernandez, Jennifer Martin
First, York, Pa.: Loretta

Bachman, Walter Bachman, Ashley Dehoff, Marjorie Schardt, Emma Stoolmaker
Frederick, Md.: Ben Anspach, John Dallavalle, Kay Dallavalle, Kevin King, Susan King, Charles Vaughn, Lori Huffer Vaughn

Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.:

Carl Haas, Christie Kleinfelter, Justin Kleinfelter, Dianne Urban, Dan Witter

Lafayette, Ind.: Ann Cripe, Mark Cripe

Lower Miami, Dayton, Ohio: Kristie Wilson

McPherson, Kan.: Stephen Burkholder, Tina Burkholder, Alberta Grosbach, Jackie

Kamphaus, Julia Largent, Leon Neher, Linda Neher, Betty Sampson

Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Allison Bruckhart, Benjamin Gladhill, Ashley Good, Jeremy Hess, Bill Kilheffner, Brenda Kline, Steven Kline, Magdalena Lutz, Montana Lutz, Ryan Martin, Tim Martin, Lily Shuke, Lydia Shuke, Tyler Zimmerman

Modesto, Calif.: Ann Marie Washington

Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.: Robert Fessler, Frank McGovern

Myersville, Md.: Glenda Rothrock, Tom Rothrock

Osage, McCune, Kan.: Miranda Hartman, Trenton Hartman, Camden Leonard

Pleasant Chapel, Ashley,

Ind.: Jess Bontrager, Justin Bontrager

Pottstown, Pa.: Billy Freese, Jesse Toth

Rossville, Ind.: Cody Popplewell, Charles Smith

Uniontown, Pa.: Jeff Diamond

West York, York, Pa.: Gary Hake, Sandra Hoover, Donald Hubbell, Vivian Hubbell, Amanda Jan, Jeffery Keefer

White Oak, Manheim, Pa.: Derek Cassel, Shane Litzenberger, Jeana Martin, Vernon Martin, Cody Snyder, Beverly Weaver

Wedding anniversaries

Black, Roy and Eleanor, Union Bridge, Md., 60

Broman, George and Marilyn, Dixon, Ill., 70

Davis, Bob and Linda, Frederick, Md., 50

Denlinger, Carl and Nancy, Lancaster, Pa., 60

Garst, Denton and Peggy, Frederick, Md., 65

Grossnickle, Byron and Virginia, New Oxford, Pa., 60

Grove, Phil and Sandy, Frederick, Md., 50

Jacoby, Paul and Anna, Harleysville, Pa., 70

Kover, Virgil and Floy, Lititz, Pa., 69

Liller, Paul and Jeanne, Keyser, W.Va., 66

Lutz, Rodney and Diane, Lititz, Pa., 55

Moser, Dave and Kay, Rohrsersville, Md., 50
Rousselow, Leroy and Maxine, Waterloo, Iowa, 76

Deaths

Allison, Elmer Raymond, 89, York, Pa., Jan. 31, 2018

Anderson, Shirley Ann Smith, 75, Ashland, Ohio, April 5

Anthony, Harry Charles, 92, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 23

Archer, Alice R., 73, South Bend, Ind., Dec. 21

Ault, Anne Lanningham, 86, York, Pa., Feb. 24, 2018

Avey, Ruth Alice Hare, 94, Mount Morris, Ill., Dec. 5

Baldwin, Michael, 75, York, Pa., July 20

Beegle, Yvonne M., 91, North Lawrence, Ohio, May 2

Belser, Julius H., Jr., 87, Evanston, Ill., Dec. 19

Bohn, Lois M., 77, Richland, Pa., Nov. 23

Borkiewicz, Robert V., 81, Peoria, Ariz., Jan. 10

Bowman, Marcella Lee, 95, Vandalia, Ohio, Jan. 15

Bowman, Richard, 95, West Salem, Ohio, Jan. 3, 2018

Bowman, Wilbur Loren, 88, Polo, Ill., Oct. 8

Burke, Claudia V. Lackey, Frederick, Md., Sept. 10

Burrier, Larry Paul, 75, Frederick, Md., Aug. 2

Chandonia, Rosalie, 96, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 7

Cline, Louise Mae, 95, Frederick, Md., Aug. 9

Conover, Ruthe A., 96, Myerstown, Pa., Nov. 17
Croft, Eric P., 51, Stanley, Va., Sept. 27

Crumbback, Bonnie Lou Posthumus, 78, Caledonia, Mich., Dec. 10

Crunkleton, Cora Susan Kuhns, 89, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 11

Deeter, Joan George, 88, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 8

Detwiler, William H., 87, Norristown, Pa., Jan. 2

Diehl, D. Nadine Bollman, 80, York, Pa., July 2

Diffenderfer, Mabel Fahnestock, 93, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 11

Ecenroad, Orpha H. Crouse, 88, Ephrata, Pa., Oct. 1

Eshleman, Audrey Shade, 82, New Oxford, Pa., Dec. 28

Fifer, Leonore, 93, Redwood City, Calif., Aug. 13

Fishburn, Gordon, 86, Chicago, Ill., Dec. 11

Fleagle, Frances Kauffman, 92, Waynesboro, Pa., Oct. 24

Flory, Maxine C., 89, Ephrata, Pa., July 13

Focht, Donald Bruce, 67, Charlotte, N.C., Oct. 21

Fox, Esther F. Bollinger, 87, Ephrata, Pa., Oct. 27

Garst, James G., 62, Frederick, Md., Oct. 21

Germack, Thomasine Taulton, 89, Frederick, Md., Nov. 7

Graybill, Hilda Ruth Taliaferro, 84, Vinton, Va., Feb. 24, 2018

Helpful perspective

Thank you for another great issue of MESSENGER. Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's report of her trip to Nigeria is helpful in bringing the situation there closer, especially with her perspective of having been there many years ago. I especially appreciate her personal reflections. The situation there is still more complex than I can comprehend, but this helps.

Rachel Gross
North Manchester, Ind.

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- Groff**, Earl E., 89, Manheim, Pa., Oct. 16
- Hall**, Richard Garfield, 85, Bassett, Va., Aug. 17
- Hamer**, John L., 95, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 15
- Harshbarger**, Mary Ellen, 89, McVeytown, Pa., Oct. 18
- Hedrick**, Karen Marie Glick, 47, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 1
- Heisel**, John C., 87, Modesto, Calif., Jan. 14
- Henschel**, Emma Jane Groff, 95, Frederick, Pa., Jan. 6
- Henthorn**, Bonnie J., 72, Ashland, Ohio, Dec. 30
- Herr**, Theresa J. Mohler, 88, Lititz, Pa., Dec. 28
- Hershey**, Velma Miller, 94, Manheim, Pa., Oct. 20
- Horst**, Doris Martin, 91, Rockville, Md., Dec. 22
- Horst**, Mary Groff, 89, Ephrata, Pa., Dec. 27
- Humphreys**, Dean Hunter, 98, Polo, Ill., Sept. 2
- Ingram**, James Huford, Jr., 73, Bassett, Va., Aug. 4
- Johnson**, Harold Lewis, 92, Martinsville, Va., Oct. 24
- Kauffman**, Betty L., 91, Waynesboro, Pa., Nov. 28
- Kautz**, Gregg E., 57, Middletown, Pa., Dec. 9
- Kazimer**, Richard, 73, Shippensburg, Pa., Nov. 24
- Keener**, Bonnie Belle, 72, Ashland, Ohio, Nov. 15
- Knechel**, Winfield, 95, Allentown, Pa., Dec. 20
- Landon**, Russell Dean, 63, Deerfield, Kan., Jan. 6
- Lloyd**, Kathleen Lowe, 95, Abbottstown, Pa., Aug. 13
- Lutz**, Howard Johnson, 81, Woodstock, Va., Dec. 16
- Mabe**, William Sanford, Jr., 75, Martinsville, Va., July 13
- Martin**, Elva H. Baer, 98, Lititz, Pa., May 15
- Mauck**, Martha Rebecca Petre, 87, La Plata, Md., Oct. 1
- Menszak**, Dennis, 75, Trumbauersville, Pa., Nov. 24
- Miller**, Arlington, 94, Lititz, Pa., Sept. 12
- Motter**, Hazel Arlene West, 81, Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 7
- Moyer**, Harold Swanson, 89, Roanoke, Va., Jan. 10
- Nierhaus**, Barry Lee, 73, Pottstown, Pa., July 28
- Norris**, Inez M. (Kitty), 71, Broadway, Va., July 21
- Olson**, James C., 84, Grundy Center, Iowa, Nov. 20
- Patterson**, Susan K., 75, Polo, Ill., Sept. 9
- Powell**, Orris Leon, 87, Moulton, Iowa, Jan. 11
- Pyles**, Carolyn, 82, Tipp City, Ohio, Dec. 24
- Ramer**, John Delone, 83, Sheloceta, Pa., Nov. 8
- Ramsey**, John Burnice, Sr., 92, Martinsville, Va., June 30
- Rauhauser**, Irene M. Plummer, 89, York, Pa., Aug. 3
- Rhodes**, Lamar D., 69, McVeytown, Pa., Jan. 6
- Rutland**, Ronald W., 68, Seven Valleys, Pa., Sept. 27
- Sell**, Anna Mary Wagner, 100, Berlin, Conn., Dec. 17
- Simler**, Duane A., 61, Freeport, Ill., Nov. 16
- Smallwood**, Wayne Eston, 80, Knoxville, Md., Oct. 26
- Smith**, Gloria Juanita, 85, Boonsboro, Md., Nov. 20
- Snavely**, Elsie Brandt, 99, Manheim, Pa., June 20
- Snyder**, Kenneth R., 87, Pine Grove, Pa., Nov. 25
- Snyder**, Lee Francis, 81, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 6
- Stauffer**, J. Lester, 96, Manheim, Pa., June 22
- Strawsburg**, James Elwood, 76, Thurmont, Md., July 31
- Stutzman**, Irma L., 95, Adrian, Mich., Nov. 1
- Tosten**, R. Paul, 93, Shippensburg, Pa., Dec. 16
- Trimmer**, Galen S., 77, Dover, Pa., Feb. 23, 2018
- Tyree**, Josephine Jewell Shepherd, 93, Salem, Va., July 19
- Veno**, Della Loraine DeBolt, 87, Uniontown, Pa., Oct. 3
- Waas**, Rebecca Brightbill, 94, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 5
- Walters**, Clara, 99, Roanoke, Va., July 15
- Ward**, Murt, 85, Lafayette, Ind., Sept. 23
- Warnke**, Ruby Mae Koehnke, 94, Fort Collins, Colo., Jan. 14
- Werkman**, Evelyn Bette Smith, 93, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 29
- Wilkins**, Ronald Irvin, Sr., 81, Staunton, Va., Dec. 12
- Williams**, Nathaniel Charles, 82, Frederick, Md., May 19
- Wine**, Marlin Emerson, 96, Lenexa, Kan., Dec. 5

Ordained

- Bear**, Charlotte, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Nokesville, Va.), Dec. 30
- Hatcher**, Zachary, Virgina Dist. (Mount Bethel, Eagle Rock, Va.), Dec. 9
- Peruso**, Russell, W. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.), Nov. 11
- Skopic**, Beverly, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Rockhill, Rockhill Furnace, Pa.), Dec. 9

Licensed

- Bilger**, Robert, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Rockhill, Rockhill Furnace, Pa.), Dec. 9
- Murrell**, Daniel, S. Plains Dist. (Clovis, N.M.), Oct. 28
- Webster**, Jessica, W. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.), Nov. 18
- Yoder**, David, S. Plains Dist. (Antelope Valley, Billings, Okla.), June 3

Placements

- Battle**, Michael, pastor, Parkway, Meadows of Dan, Va., Dec. 1
- Breeden**, Justin, pastor, French Broad, White Pine, Tenn., Jan. 1
- Combs**, Galen, from pastor, Barren Ridge, Staunton, Va., to pastor, Stone, Buena Vista, Va., Oct. 22

- Dykema**, Roberta, from pastor, Whitestone, Tonasket, Wash., to interim pastor, Springfield, Ill., Dec. 2
- Fitzkee**, Don, interim pastor, Lancaster, Pa., Dec. 17
- Hanks**, Thomas, yoked parish pastor, Fairview, Williamsburg, Pa., and Williamsburg, Pa., Jan. 1
- Lefever-Hoover**, Donna, interim pastor, Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa., Jan. 1
- Murrell**, Daniel, associate pastor, Clovis, N.M., Oct. 28
- Reed**, Todd, yoked parish pastor, Cedar Bluff, Boones Mill, Va., and Poages Mill, Roanoke, Va., Jan. 1
- Rudy**, Tabitha, interim associate district executive, Roanoke, Va., to pastor, Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va., Jan. 1
- Seganos Cohen**, Lauren, pastor, Pomona Fellowship, Pomona, Calif., Dec. 1
- Sizemore**, Tim, pastor, Peak Creek, Laurel Springs, N.C., Jan. 1
- Tabb**, Nancy, interim pastor, Fellowship, Martinsburg, W.Va., Nov. 1
- Trott**, Michael, pastor, Denton, Md., Aug. 1
- Washington**, James, pastor, Pleasant View, Elida, Ohio, Jan. 1
- Zeek**, Rebecca, interim pastor, Bedford, Pa., Dec. 1



The fall

Search an online video site for “Stari Most destruction” and you can watch Mostar’s beautiful old bridge fall; it happened during the Bosnian war in 1993. I watched these videos repeatedly while working on the Mostar article in this issue.

The pitted structure drips informal scaffolding and old tires. Shots hit; stone drops. And then the whole structure plummets, generating eight-story waves.

What does that cleanly shorn gap say to me? Why do I feel compelled to watch again and again?

For over 400 years the bridge linked a city of people from different ethnic backgrounds and religions. It stood as the iconic representation of the place, like the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Washington Monument in D.C. Demolishing it was enormously self-destructive. Croat forces, who were believed to be responsible, maintained that the bridge fell by itself, possibly due to heavy rains. (When convicted in 2017, General Praljak



JAN FISCHER BACHMAN

drank poison in court.) Conspiracy theorists even today suggest that Bosniaks destroyed the bridge and faked evidence to incriminate the Croats.

Why destroy the symbol of your own city? A strategic target, it provided the only access to one source of drinking water. And some suggest that it represented an unacceptable testimony to the humanity and value of both the enemy and boundary-crossing collaboration: Stari Most was designed by an Ottoman architect—but built by Croat stonemasons.

Watch the bridge fall. This is us, human beings. We

divide. We cut off access to living water. We destroy in order to “win.” We fail to take responsibility for the damage we do. We blame the other side, without recognizing that maybe we are on the same side. And in damaging what is most beautiful and durable, we harm ourselves and those who follow us. Although the old bridge was rebuilt, entrenched divisions in Mostar persist to this day, and rubble remains.

In Galatians 4, Paul begs, “Lead a life worth of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. . . . Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. . . . Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

In the society around us, rates of suicide and self-harm have reached record highs. When we attack and destroy, we harm each other and ourselves. We contribute to despair.

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:13-15).

At the time the German Baptists chose a new name in the early 1900s, they considered the brotherhood the most beautiful aspect of their discipleship. Will we be the Church of the Brethren? Or will the bridge fall? 

WATCH THE BRIDGE FALL. THIS IS US, HUMAN BEINGS. WE DIVIDE. WE CUT OFF ACCESS TO LIVING WATER. **WE DESTROY IN ORDER TO “WIN.”**



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Children's Disaster Services: calm, safe, reassuring



California

A wall of paintings shows a progression from anger, fear, guilt and sadness to more hopeful, cheerful pictures as the days went by.



California

"Whoever embraces one of these children as I do embraces me" —Jesus in Mark 9:37 (The Message)

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers care for traumatized children during the chaotic aftermath of a disaster, offering a caring space designated just for them where children can begin to process their deeply felt and often confusing feelings through non-guided creative play. CDS had another record-breaking year in 2018 caring for children across the nation with support from donations to the Emergency Disaster Fund.

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