

# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2019 [WWW.BRETHREN.ORG](http://WWW.BRETHREN.ORG)





Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

—Matthew 9:37-38 NIV

# Thank you BDM and CDS volunteers for working in the Lord's harvest!



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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

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Publisher: Wendy McFadden Associate editor: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Web editor: Jan Fischer Bachman  
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## on the cover

Clockwise from lower left: 700 horses ready to be loaded (*photo by Rufus Hoover*),  
a cow named hope arrives at an orphanage in Poland (*photo by Ray Zook*),  
Dan West during a world trip in the 1960s (*Brethren Historical Library and Archives*),  
the Adrian Victory Ship with horses being loaded (*photo by Rufus Hoover*),  
two brothers in Cameroon with their goats (*photo by Jake Lyell/ Heifer International*).

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# Let him eat cake

**T**he 75th anniversary of the founding of Heifer International seems like a good occasion to pass along this story, in which one Dan was curious about another Dan.

Dan Petry, then pastor of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, was wondering about the exact wording of Dan West's famous anti-hunger pledge.

Different versions had been floating around the congregation for quite some time.

What everyone there knew was that Dan West, former Middlebury church member and founder of Heifer Project (now Heifer International), promised not to eat a certain kind of food until all the hungry of the world were fed. The argument at Middlebury was whether the food in question was "dessert" in general or "cake" in particular.

"Many of us thought poor Dan never ate another dessert of any kind for the rest of his life," said Dan Petry. After some research, including communication with Dan West's daughter, Jan West Schrock, he

determined "that the exact pledge of this great man" was this: "I will not eat cake until the hungry are fed."

Summarizes Dan Petry: "Turns out Dan did greatly enjoy pies and cobbler\* until the Lord took him home. Nor did he force his cake abstinence on anyone else in his family. Lucy regularly baked birthday cakes for her children. But Dan was true to his word and never again ate cake at home or afield in honor of those who struggled for their daily bread. Can we hope (and work) for a hunger-free world in which even Dan West could enjoy a slice of cake now and then?"

Dan West had plenty to say not only about hunger, but also about peace, education, worship, economics, affluence, government—anything that intersected with living out his Christian faith. He always chose to connect himself with the "little people" of the world, and his dessert decision was an act of mindfulness that brought those people to his daily dinner table.

As we celebrate this milestone in the history of Dan West's big idea, I'm inspired by the inseparability of his vision and his practice—his vision of what the world should be and the practicality to make a difference.



\*Jan Schrock spilled the beans on this when she spoke at the MESSENGER Dinner at Annual Conference in 2006.

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# Sharing more than a meal

**P**eople just don't invite other people over for dinner anymore," Share-A-Meal Coordinator Linda Koranek observes. Long gone are the days of sharing family dinners with friends and relatives—or are they?

The Shenandoah District Disaster Auction offers an array of dinner party choices. At the Share-A-Meal booth, auction-goers pay from \$20 to \$65 or more to experience a home-cooked meal prepared by a host family in the district. Dates, times, locations, and menus are displayed for buyers to choose their dinners. Hosts welcome ticket holders into their homes and provide not only a meal, but a dining experience. The donated money helps disaster volunteers rebuild homes.

Who are the hosts? They are people who enjoy cooking and are excited to

meet new people. One host team of Janet Good and her sister, Wilda Holsinger, have been hosting 3-hour dinner parties for 12 people for more than 5 years. They serve a 4-course meal with shrimp cocktail appetizers, salad with homemade poppy seed dressing, meat, vegetables, and pies crafted from scratch. They say pies are their specialty, especially coconut cream and pecan.

Why do they work this hard to host dinners? Good says, "We enjoy it, but mostly we do it to remember and honor our dad." Their father, Harold Wampler, was one of the first people in Shenandoah District to organize trips into disaster areas to provide relief.

Camala Kite involves her Sunday school class at Mill Creek Church of the Brethren. The class picks the menu and the date. Eight people are invited into



Wilda Holsinger and Janet Good have hosted dinners for more than 5 years.

Kite's home and served a variety of food from meatloaf to salmon to Gary Cline's barbecue beef brisket, and four types of dessert. Eight volunteers commit to bring side dishes, set the table, and act as servers. Children from the family or the congregation play violin or other instruments as the entertainment. The class has been serving for 10 years or more, and the best part about it is meeting new people from the church and community.

Lee and Regina Harlow of the Mountain View-McGaheysville congregation offered their guests—a group of women who were already friends—dishes made from a plant-based cuisine, such as Thai peanut noodles and grilled vegetable salad.

Regina Harlow says, "I'm a huge believer in community and connections." With young children, she was somewhat stressed about when their schedule would be clear enough to host, and how clean her home would be. However, she found her guests were not judgmental. In fact, they sat out on the porch and watched the children play after dinner.

She observes, "There's vulnerability here; the people hosting have to be vulnerable enough to open their home and the people have to be vulnerable enough to purchase tickets. Vulnerability leads to new friendships and our family was blessed." —Brenda Sanford Diehl

This is excerpted from the Shenandoah Journal. For more about Share-A-Meal contact lkoranek@gmail.com or 540-923-4173.



## Eastern Shore Brethren celebrate sesquicentennial

**A**bout 80 people gathered at Camp Mardela in Denton, Md., on May 19 to mark the 150th anniversary of the first Brethren arriving on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. In 1869, Jacob Kline and his family settled in Caroline County. Brethren built their first meeting house about a decade later, in 1880, near Easton. Seven Mid-Atlantic District congregations are located on the Eastern Shore today.

The anniversary worship celebration, held as part of Mardela's Camp Appreciation Day, included remarks from district executive Gene Hagenberger, a mini-concert and special music by Jonathan Shively, robust hymn singing, and a litany of rededication that said, in part, "We rededicate ourselves, our congregations, our camp to being beacons of God's light on the Eastern Shore."

The service concluded by singing "Go Now in Peace," followed by a picnic dinner.

Other events include vespers at the historic Round Top meeting house in Easton on Aug. 21 and a heritage-flavored love feast service in late fall. —Walt Wiltschek

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.





**“Then the Lord answered me  
and said: Write the vision;  
make it plain” -Habakkuk 2:2a**

## In search of a vision

**Brethren come together again this month for Annual Conference,** taking place July 3-7 in Greensboro, N.C., with the theme “Proclaim Christ; Reclaim Passion.” Can you find all the Annual Conference-related words listed below? Words can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, forward or backwards.

AMEND  
COMPELLING  
DELEGATE  
EXHIBIT  
INSIGHT  
MODERATOR  
MOTION  
PASSION  
POLITY  
PRAYER  
PROCLAIM  
REPORT  
SERVE  
TABLE  
VOTE  
VISION  
WORSHIP

B	B	R	E	P	P	R	A	Y	E	R	E
C	P	A	S	S	I	O	N	M	T	H	R
O	N	T	E	N	W	H	E	H	E	A	V
M	O	E	A	M	E	T	S	T	P	N	T
P	I	O	W	B	O	R	S	R	R	R	D
E	T	A	G	E	L	E	D	S	O	H	T
L	O	V	I	P	R	E	I	P	C	W	H
L	M	I	N	V	O	T	E	G	L	R	G
I	E	S	E	E	N	R	S	B	A	O	I
N	R	I	P	O	L	I	T	Y	I	O	S
G	R	O	T	A	R	E	D	O	M	X	N
W	X	N	E	X	H	I	B	I	T	E	I



# The woman behind the man behind **Heifer Project**

by Peggy Reiff Miller

**H**eifer International has lifted millions of people out of poverty since its first shipment July 14, 1944. This 75th anniversary year is a fitting time to pay tribute to Dan West, the man who started it all. But digging into his histo-

ry, one soon realizes that his wife, Lucy, deserves a good share of the credit, too.

#### **Peace and bachelorhood**

Dan grew up on a farm in Pleasant Hill, Ohio, at the turn of the 20th century, son of a pacifist, itinerant Brethren

preacher. He was a carefree lad, interested in travel, music, and education. After high school, Dan wanted to attend a course at Bethany Bible School, but money was scarce.

"My family felt ready to get me a horse and buggy for dates with girls,"



Dan said years later in a paper on his goals. "I had to choose between that and going to Bethany." He chose Bethany for a term, and later graduated with an A.B. degree from Manchester College in 1917. "On campus Dan acquired a reputation as a deep thinker, a good conversationalist, and a most eligible bachelor," says biographer Glee Yoder.

When drafted into the US Army the next year, Dan, leaning toward conscientious objection, had to decide how far he could cooperate. After he was assigned to the infantry, he confounded his superiors by offering to go to Fort Leavenworth prison. They assigned him instead to the Quartermaster Corps in South Carolina, where his work supported the troops sent overseas.

"There I did not kill anybody," Dan told a Brethren Volunteer Service training unit years later, "but I felt a part of a killing machine. That still hurts my conscience." He left the army with a new lifetime goal: to do as much for peace as a soldier does for war.

Dan spent the next decade serving as a teacher and high school administrator in southwestern Ohio. With his passion for youth and commitment to the church, he taught

Sunday school, as well. Against the will of the district elders, he organized the first district youth cabinet for Southern Ohio and advocated for the starting of a district youth camp at Sugar Grove.

Dan's strong intellect, his passion for peace, and his gifts for leadership gained him recognition beyond Southern Ohio. He became one of "The Four Horsemen," along with Chauncey Shamberger, Alvin Brightbill, and Perry Rohrer. During the summers of 1927-1930, this dynamic team traveled across the country providing leadership for Brethren camps.

At the end of each summer, the four leaders evaluated each other's performance, says Yoder. After the

summer of 1929, the group told Dan that his "interest in people might not be as much in the person as in the functioning of his or her brain." To this 36-year-old bachelor the team also said, "You've formed the habit of allowing some of the most beautiful and intellectual women all over the country to think you're in love with them. But you don't think of them as lovers, but as minds. It's time," they counseled him, "to target in on some lovely person whose mind is good and who also has a heart."

The next summer, Dan moved to Elgin, Ill., to become director of Young People's Work for the denomination. A year and a half later, a "charming and attractive" woman joined the Elgin staff in the Missionary Education Department. In Lucille Sherck, 12 years his junior, Dan found that "lovely person whose mind is good and who also has a heart."

### **The charm of the impossible**

Lucille Sherck grew up with six brothers and two sisters on a farm near Middlebury, Ind., determined to rise above the rural, insular expectations of her community. "At age 16," says



**"DAD WAS A VERY IMPOSING CHARACTER WITH A BIG HEART," SAYS STEVE (SON OF DAN AND LUCY). "MOM SAW THIS AND SIMPLY PUT HER SEAT BELT ON FOR A GREAT BIG WORLD JOURNEY."**

daughter Jan West Schrock, "her uncle Glen Kindy asked her what she wanted to do." Lucy's answer: "I'd like to be a teacher." Her uncle helped her realize that dream, paying for her college education.

Her father, however, "disowned her when she went to college," says son Steve West. "She was determined to work through that and began teaching at the age of 19. Teaching school was overwhelming and exciting for her." Lucy taught all eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse with 36 students—an experience that no doubt primed the management skills she would later need.

Lucy was active in the church and crossed paths with Dan West at times. One such time, when Lucy was making a speech at Union Center Church of the Brethren in Indiana, "something very personal and spiritual awakened between them," Yoder says. The speech, "The Charm of the Impossible," had evidently charmed Dan West.

When Lucy arrived in Elgin and Dan began to pay her favor, some of the women cautioned, "Be careful. You'll get hurt." But she went into their engagement with her eyes open, Yoder says, knowing that Dan would be gone much of the time. "She felt the cost was not too great when compared to other young men whose goals were less important and less enduring."

"Dad was a very imposing character with a big heart," says Steve. "Mom saw this and simply put her seat belt on for a great big world journey."

#### **Dan and Lucy team up**

The couple married in October 1932. From that point on, Dan and Lucy were a team, making decisions together. This included the decision in

1937 for Dan to go to Spain to assist the Quakers in a relief program during the Spanish Civil War.

Dan wrote to executive M. R. Zigler, "After Lucy and I went over the main points of the Spanish question again, we decided that I should accept the recommendation of the Committee on Spain. And so I am planning to go." This mutual decision would leave Lucy at home with two small children, ages 3 and 1.

"It is not my preference so much as my duty, as I see it," Dan wrote to the Brethren representative of the Committee on Spain. "This much absence from home is a heavy sacrifice, and I do not believe it can rightly continue too long." This struggle between commitment to family and commitment to calling

accompanied Dan all through his life.

After working three and a half months on the Franco side of the war, Dan sought permission from Lucy to extend his visit to Loyalist Spain, where he had heard of great suffering. Even while lying sick in bed, Lucy agreed.

His 10-day sojourn in Loyalist Spain

Brethren Historical Library and Archives



#### **Which cross?**

by Dan West

Dear Lord, my cross is heavy. The weight of it  
With other things—is bending down my head  
My knees are weak.... My back and arms are sore.  
Do I have to carry it anymore?  
Couldn't I just worship yours instead?

(1967)

**SERVICIO INTERNACIONAL DE LOS AMIGOS CUÁQUEROS**  
 (FRIENDS SERVICE COUNCIL)

CENTROS INTERNACIONALES

LONDRES

PARÍS

GINEBRA



On the Train  
 Barcelona - Valencia.  
 January 18, 1938.

BARCELONA:  
 HOGAR LUIS VIVES - ANGLI, 39  
 TELÉFONO 77973

VALENCIA:  
 SORNI, 10 - TELÉFONO 17213

My Lucy,

This is the end of a meaningful day. The bright sun shine, almost like May back home, is most welcome. The stars last night, and tonight's shine intensely against the dark sky, even with the moonlight. This city is big - 1100,000, modern and beautiful - wide smooth streets and fine houses, except in the slums; and if there were no war one might spend a delightful time here, and if there were no war, one might spend one day. In the seminary where formerly Catholic priests were trained, live 2500 refugees, some trying to keep up family life but many going to pieces in every way. For 3 or 4 months 100 in a long large room, some trying to keep up family life but many going to pieces in every way. For 3 or 4 months this has been used for refugees, and my nose wasn't seriously offended. The building with several stories and three inner courts is very beautiful. The money and labor and perhaps hope, put into visible form might be justified if the priests who came of people. It is four centuries since Loyola, and more than ten since Christianity had a strong foothold here. That is long enough. A church with a chance like that can be indicted for not doing its duty. And I can understand the fury of those who want to be rid of it.

Brethren Historical Library and Archives



led to creation of the Heifer Project. At a children's hospital in Murcia, Dan observed babies and tubercular children dying from a lack of milk. He determined then and there to work on a plan of sending cows to Spain, a plan even Lucy called "an impossible dream."

With Dan's persistence, his plan for "Cattle for Europe" was adopted by the Northern Indiana District Men's Work at their April 12, 1942, meeting. The

Brethren Service Committee adopted it as a national program in January 1943, naming it "The Heifer Project."

Dan West became recording secretary of the Heifer Project Committee, and maintained this role as a volunteer for decades while carrying on his responsibilities in peace education and leadership training for the denomination. These responsibilities took him away from

home much of the year, leaving the running of their small farm and their family of five to Lucy.

"Mom had what she called *spizzerinctum*," says Steve. "I learned to know this as fire in the belly." Lucy returned to teaching in 1950, and "she became a powerful and kind teacher of many children."

When Dan retired from the Church of the Brethren staff in 1959, Lucy took

Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The only place incense arises now is in the kitchen and that is the steam from the hot soup. The soup looks good—chick peas and rice, but it would not make a satisfactory meal. 220 lbs of chickpeas and 165 lbs of rice go into soup for 2500 people—that is 2½ oz of the mixed foods per person—and each one gets about 30 grams (two ordinary slices) of dark bread; that is all for their noon meal, and only the children <sup>280</sup> there get anything in the morning. For supper they have beans and another chunk of bread. And I guess there is little else that any one gets. One mother was sitting on a bed with 12-15 oranges around her—they must have a bit of money.\* I suppose the menu varies a bit, but not much.

As we were leaving the upstairs open corridor—lovely stone pillars and rounded arches—I noticed a pile of bones lying near the wall. It looked like as though some one had had several chickens. I asked our guide <sup>(an official)</sup> about it. "No," he said. They were the bones of cats—and they were picked clean. When any of the folks can catch a cat, they have a bit more to eat. The whole thing nearly took my appetite for lunch. At the end of a simple meal, not too much but several times what these poor people had at the German Refugee, I couldn't eat my orange. I wanted to find two halves, my arms for another picture. But I couldn't well arrange it. And so I <sup>had</sup> asked Norma Jacob to give it to a mother of 7 children—one is 3 months old—who came to the house for some food tonight. She gave it to one of the children (2-3 years old) who came along. I feel much better than if I had eaten it.

Dearie I am grateful that we are able to feed our children all they need. It makes me humble, too. If you still make copies of my letters to send out over there will you send one to Jim Englehardt. Maybe he will want to give to help the children here. Please send to Alfred Jacob, several brookhaven child feeding and care center. If necessary please pay and ask us to <sup>Dept. of Agriculture</sup> to send direct. —Yours — Dan.

\* No soap, of course, and yet I was surprised to see some of the refugees in washing clothes in the river.



a year off work. Together, with 16-year-old Steve, they made a 10-month trip around the world to witness firsthand Heifer Project's work overseas.

In the couple's personal correspondence, one finds an incredible love story—a story filled with Dan's yearning to be home while at the same time fulfilling his commitment to his work, and a story filled with Lucy's yearning for Dan to

be home while at the same time supporting and enabling his calling.

In the video *Dan West: Peacemaker*, the late communications professor Paul Keller says, "Lucy West was a model of graciousness, and generosity, and patience and tolerance, and was, heaven knows, a marvelous support for him. Without her, and the way she ran the home and the family, I don't think he could have done it."

Teacher, wife, church woman, mother, farm manager, and confidante. Lucy West was all these and more. She was Dan West's partner in the creation and development of Heifer Project—a role to be celebrated in this 75th anniversary year. **M**

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



# Seven hundred horses and a ship to Greece

by Rufus M. Hoover with Cheryl L. Weber

**I** was born in 1926 and grew up on a small farm in Lancaster County, Pa., during the Great Depression and World War II. As a member of a conservative Mennonite culture, I was discouraged from leaving the confines of the conservative lifestyle and community. I would have

liked some adventure but there were few opportunities.

Then an ad posted in a local newspaper by the Brethren Service Committee in the summer of 1946 caught my interest. BSC was looking for able-bodied men to attend shipments of livestock sent to replace those

lost by European farmers during the war. I'd never traveled further than Maryland and the idea of answering this call excited me.

I applied for the fall. I would be paid \$150 and I'd be going to Greece. I'll have to admit I was a little afraid of the unknown.



## A letter to the Church of the Brethren • July 2019

Blessed passionate brothers and sisters:

I am thrilled and humbled to have been invited to share a few words with you. Dan West and his team launched Heifer Project 75 years ago. We feel blessed to continue the work with the values and principles of the Church of the Brethren deeply embedded in all we do. We continue to work peacefully, purposefully, and together to end hunger and poverty. We are known all over the world "by the manner of our living." Alexander Mack's early vision still lives with us.



Early in my tenure at Heifer, I was called to visit Castañer in Puerto Rico—one of the first sites for delivery of heifers in 1944. A small Church of the Brethren church still stands there. The people of Castañer remember us well, with the community living in witness and service. The deep values of caring for one another, self-reliance, and accountability which animate our work were strong and evident. It was amazingly powerful.

I committed to making sure that my mission at Heifer International is to ensure that those values live on and prosper everywhere we work. We express and practice them through the 12 Cornerstones and our vigorous commitment to Values-Based Holistic Community Development practices. There is no question in our minds and work that this deep rootedness to values that are sprung from our genesis in the Church of the Brethren is the core of our success to spread joy, love, and impactful service.

Know that all of us—current, past, and future—at Heifer International are and will be forever grateful for your support, your prayer. Your legacy is safe with us.

In gratitude,

Pierre Ferrari  
President and CEO of Heifer International

On Oct. 1, I set sail aboard the S.S. *Adrian Victory* ship. Some 740 horses had been loaded by crates onto the vessel. I was one of 30 "cowboys" assigned to care for the animals. We ranged from a middle-aged man to a young Amish fellow near my age. One cowboy was a Japanese-American man from California.

We were partnered up and each pair was assigned a share of horses to feed and water. I did my chores between mealtime bouts of seasickness.

The animals suffered as well. That's when I learned that horses go down only when they're sick and you must get them up again. By the time we arrived in Greece, eight horses had died from seasickness—an unnecessary loss as one injection from the onboard vet was all that they needed. But I'm happy to say that all of mine survived.

Living conditions could be interesting. The cowboys slept in bunks three beds high. The guy above me was often in bed with seasickness that he remedied by eating prunes. One day in rough seas, he lost his grip on the plate and it landed on the steel floor. Prunes flew everywhere but the glass plate didn't break.

The entries in my journal chronicled our advance across the Atlantic:

**Oct. 9:** See Spain. 8 p.m. - pass through the Strait of Gibraltar - 10 o'clock at Rock of Gibraltar.



Rufus Hoover

Rufus Hoover

**Oct. 10:** Passed by the northern coast of Africa.

**Oct. 12:** Fed [the] fish . . . my breakfast (seasick). See Sicily.

**Oct. 13:** See southern end of Greece. Hay up. Horse down. Got him up. Came to Piraeus (Port of Athens) about 4 o'clock and anchored there.

At Piraeus, we were told to sail further to Thessalonica (Thessaloniki) where the Greeks would unload the horses. We arrived in port at 8 a.m. the next morning.

I was eager to explore. This was the land of the Bible, its names familiar from the accounts of the

Apostle Paul's missionary journeys in the book of Acts.

**Oct. 17:** Went to town. See old wall and prison. Bought mouth organ for \$2.50, 2 little cakes for 20 cents or 1,000 drachmas. Visit St. Demeter church and St George Church.

**Oct. 19:** Drove to Philippi in a Mercedes Benz station wagon. Twelve cowboys, interpreter and driver crammed in.

We paid \$6 each for that trip of 120 miles. In some places, the road had been torn up during the war but whenever he could, our driver sped up to 50 miles per hour. I paid 1,000 drachmas and two Life Savers candies plus a box

of matches to hire a rowboat back to the ship that evening.

I boarded the *S.S. Adrian Victory* ship ready to head home, but the journey had stirred up my appetite for more travel. My horizons had been broadened. I felt as though I'd contributed to my limited 8th-grade education. I will never forget my first adventure as a young man who sailed with 700 horses on a ship bound for Greece. **M**

Cheryl Weber, a freelance writer from Lancaster County, Pa., assisted her uncle, Rufus Hoover, in creating this account from his journals and memories of being a seagoing cowboy. She explains, "I just felt my uncle's story was worth telling and he would be blessed to know that others might read and appreciate it. He is doing well at the age of 92."

**MY HORIZONS HAD BEEN BROADENED. . . . I WILL NEVER FORGET MY FIRST ADVENTURE AS A YOUNG MAN WHO SAILED WITH 700 HORSES ON A SHIP BOUND FOR GREECE.**



Where will **YOU** find  
your perfect fit?





Lori Sollenberger Knepp

# All of us

by Beth Sollenberger

**A** cow's esophagus is designed to support two-way traffic. Most bovine critters spend lots of time cropping grass, swallowing, allowing time for rumination. And then that same grass, now a little past fresh, reappears to be ground, re-swallowed, and digested.

On occasion things go wrong with a dairy cow's chemical balance and she needs medicine. The same system designed to return a cud for extended chewing can try the patience of any pill pusher. I have a tiny bit of experience sending a pill down, watching it reappear, sending the slimy thing back down, watching it reappear, sending it back down, and hoping it eventually stays there to do some good.

Likewise, there are things Paul repeats more than a few times, maybe in the hopes that readers will eventually hold on to them long enough to ponder, absorb, and be changed for the better. One of those phrases that comes up multiple times in the first chapter of his letter to the Philippians is the phrase "all of you." Five times in the first chapter Paul refers to "all of you" as if there might be some doubt in someone's mind that others are not included. One Sunday school class, one kitchen committee, one litmus test does not rule others out of the letter. "All of you" appears to mean the letter is addressed to everyone!

One individual, according to the old adage, can't hold up a long rope without someone opposite holding up the other end. I hope you have enough diversity around you to hold up both ends of many ropes. However, in this day and age the rules are not clear for helping that much diversity live together with joy, and our culture often encourages spitting out instead of coexisting.

It never ceases to confound me that the bread of communion is crumbled and shared far beyond my understanding, even with folk sharing a pew with me, even with sisters and brothers half a world away. What should I make of the fact that we, maybe even all of us, are to share one loaf of bread? And what does Paul mean when he says it is more important to proclaim Christ than to get it right?

What does it mean to consider a letter written to "all of you" on a day when "all of us" do not agree?

This is when I think it is important to remember some of the words of that letter that Paul, a Christian, penned from his prison cell, while chained to his guard, an unconverted Roman. Remember the words: "Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my impris-

onment. What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice" (Philippians 1:15-18).

It's pretty clear: The message of Christ trumps the motives and mistakes of the preacher. And what is the message of Christ? Well, if we look at the Gospels we learn some things about the one we follow.

The classic book *The Upside Down Kingdom*, by Donald B. Kraybill, explores how "the kingdom of God points to an inverted, upside-down social order." You can think through your own list of favorite upside-down suggestions from Jesus' life and ministry, beginning with the Savior born as a refugee baby instead of coming as a mighty superhero king in a blaze of glory and power. Jesus gives us a world where prostitutes have a place and squandering brothers get a party, women are not relegated to the kitchen, those who mourn receive a blessing, and a little boy's lunch feeds a crowd.

It is summed up in Jesus' mission statement proclaimed at the beginning of his ministry on earth and recorded in Luke 4: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus came to invade our comfort zone and to upend our way of life.

**T**he Church of the Brethren has an assortment of congregations, and anytime I think

I might actually have a handle on what holds them all together I usually receive a stinging dose of reality. It falls on everyone's shoulders to pursue communication and work to grow our understanding of one another. Sometimes it leads all of us to see Christ from a new perspective.

The board of the district where I serve once received a letter from a congregation asking how the district would respond to a pastor doing something that was not in accord with polity. Well, that brought out the opinions at our board retreat! One person said that polity is polity and they would need to lose their credentials immediately. Another person replied that he might as well walk out now. It was a long conversation that kept going all through the lunch line, the eating time, and again back around the meeting circle.

Eventually we had a proposal to vote on. The vote was called for and the first person said, "I don't agree with this, but I understand why we are doing it and I will not

vote against it." How we live together takes into account that it is "all of us" together in the community of faith.

This gets us to the second chapter of Philippians, where Paul writes, "Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

Paul likes this phrase and uses it other places. I'm not so fond of it because sometimes it is used as a test to be sure I measure up to another's understanding. I am reminded of my mother's experience helping a neighbor can pears.

My mother always cut the pears in half and cored them before peeling the halves. The neighbor declared that when canning at her house the pear must be peeled whole and then cut in half and cored. When having the same mind means getting peeled pear halves in the jar, I get it. When having the same mind means doing it my way or else—well, I have a rebellious nature. We are created with minds and, in the church, we do place Christ at the center of our existence and our salvation. When that is being of the same mind, I am all in.

Paul's description of Christ Jesus is an illustration of the upside-down kingdom that we sometimes long for and sometimes just plain cannot comprehend. We live in a world where power and might prevail, money talks, and greed abounds. What does it mean to wave others ahead in line, invite children to eat first, and encourage everyone to walk and work and climb together instead of stepping on someone to get ahead?

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11).

It seems to me we are back at the beginning: Proclaim, confess, live Christ.

Ponder and repeat. All of us. 

Beth Sollenberger is district executive of South/Central Indiana District of the Church of the Brethren.

**FIVE TIMES IN THE FIRST CHAPTER PAUL REFERS TO "ALL OF YOU"  
AS IF THERE MIGHT BE SOME DOUBT IN SOMEONE'S MIND THAT  
OTHERS ARE NOT INCLUDED.**



Caleb Kragt

# When the new feels natural

## A church that worships in three languages

by Caleb Kragt

**W**hen visitors experience worship with our congregation, the first thing they mention is the “surprising” mix of languages and cultures. “Unique” is a word I often hear, or “not what you’d expect in rural Ohio.”

Fair enough. Multicultural congregations are few and far between, and in that sense West Charleston is unusual.

Yet in another sense, our congregation—this community where immigrants and refugee families have found welcome space to worship; where my son has learned to sing “This Little Light of Mine” in English, Swahili, and Spanish; and where the wise-from-age generation of gray-haired white folks loves to see the limber generation of majority-minority young folks gather up for children’s story—is not at all unusual.

Most of our members were plain, salt-of-the-earth people, who couldn’t see Jesus turning children away just because their parents came from another country or spoke a different language. Now, because of that welcome, our membership is growing—and diverse. Isn’t that what we should expect to find when Christians from various nations and tongues live near one another? If not, perhaps we’ve lost sight of how natural it can be to make new connections.

For example, one of the first families of color began to attend because of the relationship they developed with their “Grandpa” Don. It didn’t require any background in Spanish, prophetic inspiration, or seminary training on his part. While a Guatemalan immigrant mother was attending a Bible study, Don’s wife watched her children. Don was initially skeptical that he needed to have any involvement, but then the kids came to visit his wife when she was ill. Their love for her was clear and genuine, and it was impossible to avoid falling in love with them.

Just before Don’s wife eventually passed away, she made it clear that he was to take good care of those children, and he certainly has. Even their cousins now call Don their grandpa! Unable to visit their biological grandparents still in Central America, these grandkids nonetheless have the love of generations beyond their parents supporting them as they now begin to graduate high school and navigate adulthood.

Grandpa Don’s story is treasured in the congregation on its own merits. It was also a significant part of opening the church to fully include Spanish-speaking and immigrant families. The congregation had long prayed for children, and now here they were: bilingual grandchildren, with a new

FOR THE CONGREGATION IT HAS BEEN QUITE NATURAL. WE'RE SIMPLY TRYING TO FOLLOW WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS **AND TEND TO THE NEIGHBORS WE FIND IN OUR PATH.**

shade of skin. And each family that would visit, hear some Spanish in music or prayers, and eventually stay, continued to reinforce the mutual benefits of welcome. Welcoming new members and new children brought energy and life. Coming to join the community meant finding stability and support through challenging times.

This was the congregation as I first experienced it, as an intern in 2015-2016 while a student at Bethany Theological Seminary. The church was beginning to be bilingual and pondering what it would really mean to be multicultural. It was changing quite rapidly, doing something “unusual,” and yet the Spirit had much more in store.

In the fall of 2017, pastor Irv Heishman received a call from a friend, a Mennonite pastor in Arizona, who wondered whether there would be a welcoming worship community for a Congolese refugee family who had to move to the Dayton area for jobs and a lower cost of living. Was this going to be the point at which West Charleston started telling our Lord, “No, not now”?

It was another Don who stepped up to the call, beginning with that first family and then a second family referred from Arizona, and continuing as these members brought their relatives into the community. Don wasn’t someone who had spent years of service in Africa, or who quickly picked up on Swahili (the common language of the refugee camps). He

Within the next year, the US population age 18 and under will be “majority-minority” (less than 50 percent white), although the entire population is not expected to make that transition until around 2045. West Charleston reflects that trend well, with our ethnic diversity predominantly among younger members—and especially visible at children’s story. We have to navigate the differences not just between our cultures and languages (as a multicultural church), or between older and younger generations (as any intergenerational church has to), but both simultaneously. Watch for the same “intergenerational crosscultural navigation” in congregations, communities, and politics across the country: it isn’t unique, it’s everywhere.

was the right person at the right time because he was retired and had a vehicle that could help move furniture from Goodwill.

Don also had the skills from trips with Brethren Disaster Ministries to patch up rental properties of negligent landlords. The difference was that this time he didn’t have to leave after a few weeks. He is able to visit and worship with the families whose homes he has helped establish. That meant he was the one who was comfortable enough to carefully ask the questions to help acculturate folks who had known only refugee camps. (“I notice that you still have clothes in boxes along the wall. Do you know how we would use dressers, like the one I offered you?”) Most importantly, Don is the one who was aware that one of these junior high youth would be lonely as his siblings went to National Youth Conference; he made a point of taking him to his first baseball game!

So, while it may have seemed strange to outsiders that a congregation would add a third language to our music, for the congregation it has been quite natural. We’re simply trying to follow where the Spirit leads and tend to the neighbors we find in our path.

It certainly isn’t inevitable—there have been points when we could have shied away. We could pretend not to notice our neighbors in need. But it seems that stories like ours should feel more and more natural. We are a plain and faithful people. As we read the New Testament alongside our brothers and sisters in faith, we cannot escape the clear example and teaching laid out for us: Jesus has torn down the dividing walls between us. We do our best to live into the truth of that unity in Christ.

Can you imagine swapping stories in the kingdom of heaven one day, amid the multitude from every nation and tongue? We might be surprised to remember that, for a short while, so many Christians thought it was normal to worship only alongside folks who looked and talked the same. From the perspective of eternity, it’s the short period of the segregated church that’s “unusual,” a kind of worship that’s “not what you’d expect” from followers of Jesus. 

Caleb Kragt is one of the two pastors at West Charleston Church of the Brethren in Tipp City, Ohio.



Glenn Riegel

# The uncommon music man

*Ken Medema keeps hitting all the right notes with Brethren*

by Walt Wiltschek

**A**t one point early in his career, Ken Medema thought he might be the next great Christian rock artist, another Keith Green or Second Chapter of Acts. He chose instead to be the first Ken Medema, and he doesn't regret a bit of it.

With a unique blend of storytelling, improvisation, stirring tunes, and lots of heart, he captures audiences of all ages in a way that few others do. An afternoon or evening with Ken Medema is simultaneously a concert and a worship service, thrill and therapy, reflection and inspiration.

"People say, 'How do you describe your work?' and I don't have a clue," says Medema, who has been blind since birth. "I don't know how to describe it, because it's a part of this and that, a fusion of many things."

## 'Comfortable in my own skin'

His trajectory-shifting epiphany came in the 1970s at a national seminar for Christian artists in Colorado that featured concerts each night, drawing large crowds. Medema had heard many of the other acts, but when he took the stage he focused on interpreting three biblical stories through song.

After he finished, the thought came to him: "I don't belong here." He realized he was doing something different

from anything else happening in that Christian rock environment. Different, but good. So he decided to get off the fast track and do what he did well.

For a time, the choice continued to gnaw at him. Could he cut a hit record? Could he be an international star? Could he be the one whose voice you'd hear every time you turned on the radio?

Eventually, though, the doubts went away. And today, at age 75, he just feels good about being Ken.

"I'm so happy I don't get that sense anymore. I don't feel inadequate," Medema says. "I'm really comfortable in my own skin. . . . I don't feel like I have to be anybody except me. I just love that. I wish I had been able to find that place a lot sooner in my life."

In that spirit, he named the music publishing arm of his ministry Brier Patch Music, after the Brer Rabbit stories he loved as a child. "Brer Rabbit lived in a place not comfortable for anyone else," he says on his website, "and we have decided to follow him there."

He's been at it for more than 45 years now, and he has no plans of stopping anytime soon.

"I'm feeling as chipper as ever, as much energy as I ever had," Medema says. "I'll keep going as long as I have breath."

**"THESE WERE MY PEOPLE! EVERYTHING ABOUT THEM—THE JUSTICE, THE PEACE, THEIR WHOLE WORK ETHIC AND WAY OF TALKING—SOUNDED LIKE PEOPLE I GREW UP WITH."** —Ken Medema

### Singing stories

Perhaps the most notable feature of Medema's shows is the segment when he invites audience members to step up to the microphone and share personal stories. He then weaves each one into an instantly composed song. That focus grew out of his training in music therapy at Michigan State University and his later work in the field.

Medema's ability to hold details in his head came partly from his experience as a blind student, he says. He didn't want to clack away on his Braille machine in class, so he developed mnemonic skills that enabled him to remember key phrases from a lecture and then put it all down at home. On-the-spot composing was the next step.

"Once I realized I had this gift of improvisation and started listening to people's stories and wanted to retell those stories, that became a passion for me," Medema says. "Since I love story anyway—I'm a hopeless reader—it became a passion to dig into the story and find the nuts and bolts of what the person was saying behind the words."

It's a skill he continues to work on, he says, and, while he admits that it's sometimes hard to keep each song fresh and new, his ability to do so successfully continues to amaze.

Traveling with producer/assistant Beverly Vander Molen, Medema takes his distinctive performances all over the country and even around the world (such as a series of events in Kenya in late May and early June). He also co-founded Interlude, a retreat ministry that offers sabbath time and runs conferences and workshops for music leaders.

Everywhere he goes, he leaves enthusiastic fans in his wake.



## KEN'S RIGHT ARM

**W**hen Ken Medema talks about his ministry, it's often "we"

because, while he is the sole on-stage performer, his ministry is not a solo act.

A team of people assists with finances, graphic design, website work, booking, and more. Most prominent among them is pro-



ducer and traveling companion Beverly Vander Molen, who for 33 years has accompanied him on all his trips, makes sure all necessary arrangements are made, and serves as a visual navigator and encourager.

"It's so many details that she's involved in, and she makes it work," Medema says. "It's been very reinforcing and comforting to have someone who says again and again that this is the right thing, this is holy work, where we need to be."

Vander Molen, meanwhile, appreci-

ates the opportunity to be part of Medema's powerful ministry. She says each time she sees him work with an audience, she thinks of a comment that his wife, Jane, once made—that watching an audience respond to him "is like watching ice melt."

"The fun part of what I get to do (is) when I see that people are moved and that they are willing to tell their stories, people who probably never get up in front of other people," Vander Molen says. "It makes me feel like we were born to do this."

"My first memory of Ken is when I was in high school at National Youth Conference," says Emily Tyler, who grew up in Kansas and now serves as director of Brethren Volunteer Service. "I attended his workshop, and I shared a very vulnerable story that he immediately turned into a song—and I was in awe. Since then I have countless memories of Ken bringing me to tears as he skillfully composes meaningful responses to reflections offered at various conferences."

### The Brethren connection

Interestingly, along the way the Church of the Brethren has become a key thread in Medema's life and work, too. The connection began in the mid-1970s, when Ralph Moyer—then on the pastoral staff at York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren—heard him at a pastors' conference and invited him to come to York for a performance.

Medema had grown up in the Dutch Reformed tradition and later became a Baptist after meeting his wife-to-be, Jane, at Michigan State. Medema says his new father-in-law, a Baptist pastor who "was a justice guy before it was popular," was quite diligent in educating him about Anabaptist beliefs and theology and polity.

So when Medema intersected with the Brethren, he found some resonance.

"To come to another denomination I knew nothing about and discover not only Anabaptism but also justice people and peace people made me feel so at home I wanted to leap up and down with joy," he says. "These were my people! Everything about them—the justice, the peace, their whole work ethic and way of talking—sounded like people I grew up with."

"And that love only got deeper as I got more ensconced in the Brethren world. It's like when the door first opens and you see the sunlight. I kept thinking, 'Whoa! This is cool!'"

The feeling has been mutual. Over the years, the invitations have kept coming. Medema has performed at numerous National Youth Conferences, Annual Conferences, and other events, as well as at many individual congregations. He will be a featured performer again at the Church of the Brethren National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) in early September.

"He really understands who we are, and can connect with who we are as Brethren," says Christy Waltersdorff, coordinator of this year's NOAC and pastor of York Center Church of the Brethren (Lombard, Ill.). "I've worked with a lot of people and he is one of the most genuine performers I've ever worked with. There's never any ego, and that's pretty refreshing. In the midst of all the craziness at conferences, Ken is kind of the calm center. When you're in communication with Ken, you feel like you're the most important person in that moment for him."

Erin Matteson, a Church of the Brethren spiritual director in California, had such a moment in December,

## ABOUT KEN MEDEMA

- Ken Medema has recorded more than 40 albums. The most recent is *Nothing Like the Rain*.
  - Some of his best-known songs include "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying," "The Tree Song (I Saw a Tree by the Riverside)," and "Bound Together (and Finely Woven)."
  - He did his undergraduate and master's work at Michigan State University, studying music therapy and performance. He worked as a music therapist, in Fort Wayne, Ind., and northern New Jersey, before embarking on a performing career in 1973.
  - He was born in Grand Rapids, Mich., but lives today in the San Francisco Bay area of California with his wife of more than 50 years, Jane, who also studied music at Michigan State and later earned a master of divinity. "She's had a lot to do with my theological formation," Medema says. They have two children and four grandchildren.
  - He has performed live in 49 states over his career. The only one he hasn't hit? Alaska. He had a booking there in the early 1980s, but the group canceled at the last minute.
  - On his wish list? Driving a car. "If I never get to drive that's fine," he says, "but if there's ever a self-driving car where I could get in and push a couple of buttons, that would be fun."

when she and her husband, Russ, were working at a Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) project in Saint Thomas, US Virgin Islands. They were surprised to learn that Medema was coming to do a concert for the disaster relief workers amid other stops on the island.

"Ken gave all of us workers a private concert on whatever little organ they had," Matteson says. "And he wrote the most lovely song just for us about BDM's work. It was one of those Spirit things you could not plan, nor have ever anticipated. Your job is just to recognize it as grace, and savor.... Ken shows us a great model of what it looks like to get in touch with who and how you've been created to be, and go out and simply live that."

As Medema was preparing for that Virgin Islands event, he says he heard about friends getting ready to do Christmas-season arena tours. He thought for a moment about what it would be like to do that. Then he visited a psychiatric hospital for children on the island. As he sang and talked to the supposedly non-verbal children, they each gradually opened up and told their stories.

"I realized again that you can't do this in an arena tour," Medema says. "It's holy work." 



Manchester University Radically Obedient Brethren Outreach Team members: (front) Connor Ladd, Dinah Gilbert, Laura Brubaker  
(back) Nolan McBride and Zoe Vorndran

## ROBOT Team Connects with Congregations

Manchester University values its connection with the Church of the Brethren, as well as ministry training for its students. Each spring, the University sends out a team of students to visit two or three congregations to plan and implement an entire service

from theme and scripture to preaching and worship. Known as ROBOT (Radically Obedient Brethren Outreach Team), these students are not only spiritual leaders in this program, but ambassadors of Manchester's mission and values.

### A LONG HISTORY OF OUTREACH



Manchester students have visited congregations since 1905 with the organization of the Volunteer Mission Band of Manchester College. [Photo from 1915]



Continued as "deputation teams" in coordination with various Christian movements on campus, they later became known as "outreach teams." [Photo from 1959]



[www.manchester.edu](http://www.manchester.edu)

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*"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech  
but with actions and in truth." -1 JOHN 3:18*

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# The whole of the fabric

**T**hese have not been easy times to navigate together as a church. The disagreements over sexuality have morphed into the voices of two extreme positions. The arguments over biblical authority and interpretation have been plentiful, together with the consistent reminders that the “other” is not following a particular statement or position of the church. At times it feels like a battle of wills, with one side working to outplay the other in an effort to save “their” church from the opposition.



DAVID STEELE

Despite our situation, it is important that we peel back the arguments and recognize that our Church of the Brethren structure, polity, and positions, when woven together, are the fabric of our common commitment to community—our commitment to one another. The 2017 report to Annual Conference on “The Authority of Annual Conference and Districts Regarding the Accountability of Ministers, Congregations, and Districts” was an effort to acknowledge the whole of our fabric in the midst of the question of accountability. While that report affirmed the 1983 Conference statement “Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective,” it also noted that “the authority of Annual Conference and districts regarding the accountability of ministers, congregations and districts is more complex and pertains not only to same-sex marriage, but also to a host of other Annual Conference statements and positions.”

Structurally, what we tend to miss in our arguments is that our commitment and accountability to one another

cannot simply revolve around just those positions or polity we agree with but must embody the whole of the fabric.

Without a doubt there is a complexity to our structure that cannot be addressed in this short piece. And yes, the district is authorized by Annual Conference to credential ministers and hold them accountable, embodying the whole of the fabric. And many Brethren have biblically based beliefs and convictions that would prioritize or dismiss certain positions of the denomination. However, I am not aware of anything in Church of the Brethren polity that gives one Annual Conference statement more weight than another. So if we are attending to the whole of the fabric, are we in fact willing to be held accountable to all of the polity and positions of Annual Conference in the same way we are asking that others be held accountable?

I’ve been in the church long enough to know that just by asking this question, some people will assume I carry a particular bias. I want to assure them that their assumptions are correct. My bias is my commitment to the Church of the Brethren and to working to live in harmony with all the polity and positions of the church.

In that acknowledgement is also the knowledge that in the end, our polity and our Annual Conference positions will not save a church filled with imperfect people. Even with a desire to try to gather up our structure and positions into a nice neat package, held together with a ribbon representing our common identity and purpose, there always will be another issue or another difference that works to divide us.

Despite our differences over the years, we have found a way to be the church because of our common commitment to the centrality of Christ. For some, our way of living together is no longer enough. Yet, even in the crossfire of competing voices, I know that many share my bias for commitment to the Church of the Brethren. Many are striving to care for the whole fabric of the church. With these efforts we are continuing the work of Jesus. **M**

David Steele is general secretary of the Church of the Brethren.

**DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES OVER THE YEARS, WE HAVE FOUND A WAY TO BE THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF OUR COMMON COMMITMENT TO THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST.**

## SAY WHAT?

A Bible study series



# Where two or three are gathered

by Tim Harvey

**I**f memory serves, the first time I heard the phrase “where two or three are gathered” misquoted

was on a blustery winter evening in the fellowship hall of my first congregation. A few minutes after Bible study was to begin, the unusually small group concluded that no one else was coming on this cold evening. It was at that point when one of the members said, “I sure am glad Jesus said, ‘Where two or three are gathered, I am with them.’ Looks like we just make the cut tonight!”

We all recognized the good-natured joke. No real harm was done by the misapplication of Matthew 18:20; after all, Jesus’ presence among us is not dependent on the number who have gathered. But do we realize that Jesus’ promise to be with “two or three gathered in my name” is intended for times when sin has badly damaged the relationships within the church family?

This study returns to the topic of conflict resolution, previ-

ously discussed with the phrase “It’s not my place to judge” in the March issue. Our focus here will be Matthew 18:1-20.

### The urgency of reconciliation

Brethren have long realized that the love we have for our brothers and sisters in the church is a commentary on our love for God. This love includes a commitment to confession of sin and reconciliation. Knowing that our self-centeredness would create problems, Jesus gave specific instructions on how to proceed in times of brokenness.

But while Brethren have often looked to Matthew 18:15-20 for instruction on healing broken relationships, this process of reconciliation is not the only thing Jesus had to say on this subject. All of Matthew 18 is relevant for understanding the urgency of reconciling broken relationships in the church.

Jesus began by emphasizing the importance of the so-called “little ones” in verses 18:1-7. These people are the stan-

## WHEN THE FABRIC OF OUR CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS HAS BEEN STRETCHED TO THE BREAKING POINT, JESUS PROMISED TO BE WITH US.

dard by which spiritual authenticity is measured, and not those who might appeal to other qualifications (like being one of the 12 disciples!) to be considered great.

The need to be careful in our actions toward the “little ones” is described in the starkest terms. Possibly because these persons are most likely to be affected by the sinful actions of others (due to age or spiritual immaturity) Jesus said it would be better to be “drowned in the depth of the sea” than to become a stumbling block to such as these whom Jesus has welcomed into the kingdom.

The spiritual value of these persons is further highlighted in the parable of the lost sheep (18:10-14), where Jesus said that any shepherd would leave 99 sheep in the relative safety of the group to search for one sheep that has wandered off. Reclaiming lost sheep into the flock of faith is of great importance to God and should be a primary focus of congregational life.

### A difficult passage

Perhaps you have noticed that this discussion skipped the unpleasant words of 18:8-9, where Jesus said we are to “cut off” parts of our body that cause us to stumble. In my experience, discussions of these verses typically focus on actions like theft or lust or adultery—sins that we can imagine committing with our hand, foot, or eye. We likely interpret these verses in this way because Jesus did so himself in the very similar passage of Matthew 5:27-30. Certainly, a careful examination of specific temptations that we each face is an important spiritual practice.

But what if Jesus was making a different point here? Notice that the emphasis of Matthew 18 so far has been on how our attitudes and choices affect other people:

- Who is the greatest? A little child (vv. 1-5).
- What puts us in great spiritual peril? Causing a little one to stumble (vv. 6-7).

### For further reading

*Caring Like Jesus: The Matthew 18 Project*, Daniel Ulrich and Janice Fairchild (Brethren Press). A careful biblical and theological analysis of Matthew 18, including illustrations provided by Church of the Brethren members.

*Matthew* (Believers Church Bible Commentary Series), by Richard B. Gardner (Herald Press). A commentary on the Gospel of Matthew from a Church of the Brethren perspective.

Both books are available from Brethren Press.

- What sheep is most important? The one that wandered off (vv. 10-14).

With this emphasis on “the other” in mind, perhaps it is more consistent to recognize that the urgency of “cutting off” the part of our body that causes us to stumble has to do with the spiritual impact our own choices have on other people. Even as we note Jesus’ use of hyperbole here—we don’t literally tear out our eye; even a blind person can lust—perhaps we can see that it is important to confess our own sin because we do not follow Jesus as individuals. We are part of a church family and our relationships matter. Our sin affects more than ourselves; it can cause great spiritual harm to others, especially to “little ones.”

The significance of confession and reconciliation being a congregational process is embodied in 18:15-20. In times of broken relationships, we are to speak to the one who has offended us, not about them. If need be, witnesses are invited to be part of the process, potentially including the entire congregation. And if the relationships remain broken, the church must treat such a one as a “Gentile and a tax collector.”

While some may be troubled by the thought of excommunication, even here the focus remains on the “little ones.” In this situation of extreme brokenness, the church is saying to the other, “Because of your refusal to reconcile the spiritual harm you’ve been part of, we’re no longer certain if you’re one of us. But we still want you back, and we won’t give up on you.” Matthew 18:17 is the parable of the lost sheep put into practice.

### Where two or three are gathered

It is at this point that Jesus promised to be with “two or three gathered in my name.” When the fabric of our congregational relationships has been stretched to the breaking point, Jesus promised to be with us. The power of human sin to separate us from one another is never stronger than the power of God to bring reconciliation.

Think back to a time when you were aware of broken relationships in your life. Perhaps it was within your congregation. Maybe it was at Annual Conference. Wherever it was, did you believe that Jesus was with you as you worked to reconcile the brokenness? Did you even try?

Unfortunately, people often give up on reconciliation and leave the church long before we’ve come to the end of Jesus’ power to reconcile. What are we admitting about our faith in Jesus if leaving the church seems better than reconciling broken relationships? 

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

# What is the best translation of the Bible?

**P**eople often ask, “**What is the best translation of the Bible?**” Robert Alter

suggests that the best translation of the Bible—at least, the Old Testament portion of the Bible—is one that retains, as much as possible, the word order, vocabulary, and rhythm of the Hebrew text.

Although trained as a scholar of European and American literature, Alter has spent the last four decades translating the Hebrew Scriptures into English. In the slim volume titled *The Art of Bible Translation*, Alter discusses his approach to this task.

From the beginning my translation was impelled by a deep conviction that the literary style of the Bible in both the prose narratives and the poetry is not some sort of aesthetic embellishment of the “message” of Scripture but the vital medium through which the biblical vision of God, human nature, history, politics, society, and moral value is conveyed (xiii).

Alter has strong opinions. He calls William Tyndale a “genius.” (Working in the 16th century, Tyndale was the first

to draw directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts to produce his English version.) He admires the 1611 King James Version and refers to the work of its translators as “inspired literalism.”

Alter dislikes the “dynamic equivalence” approach to translation, which prioritizes readability over authenticity to the source text and domesticates the Bible. (The Good News Bible and the Contemporary English Version are examples of the dynamic equivalence approach.) He prefers “formal equivalence,” because it retains as much of the original Hebrew sentence structure as possible. Alter suggests that the King James translators made this decision because they thought that, if God communicated this way in Hebrew, they should reproduce it in English.

Although Alter admires the King James Version, he admits it has serious limitations for modern readers. It contains inaccuracies and uses language that is now obsolete. In his own translation, Alter employs the formal equivalence



CHRISTINA BUCHER

approach of the King James Version in language that is accessible to 21st-century readers.

Any serious student of the Bible should read this book, although, to be honest, it is a difficult read. It is hard to make a book about translation interesting for those who do not know one of the two languages under discussion. Alter does a good job of explaining biblical Hebrew for non-Hebrew readers, but even so, it is a challenge.

In addition, Alter sometimes gives examples from English literature to illustrate a point he wants to make. In discussing rhythm, he refers to Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. To explain the challenge of capturing Hebrew wordplay in English translations, he points us to the poetry of John Donne. Some readers may need to refer to Wikipedia for an explanation of the dactylic hexameter of the Homeric epics.

That said, this book is filled with insights that make it worth the effort. If you read his section on Nathan’s parable (2 Samuel 12) in the chapter on rhythm, you will marvel at the way in which the Hebrew text communicates how far David has fallen. Alter explains how the distinctive rhythm of the story Nathan tells King David would have clearly communicated that Nathan was telling a parable, not relating an actual event. Yet, David is clueless and thinks his prophet is reporting to him on an actual incident, which leads him to pronounce judgment—unknowingly—on himself.

In the chapter on syntax, Alter explains how English versions destroy the effect of God’s command to Abraham in Genesis 22. The sequence of the Hebrew delays the name “Isaac” to the very end of the divine speech: “Take, pray, your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac.” Most English translations reorder the sequence to make it sound more natural in English but, in doing so, they ruin the inherent tension of Abraham waiting anxiously to learn which son God means for him to take.

In other chapters, Alter discusses the importance of word choice (chapter 3), the challenge of translating sound play and word play into English (chapter 4), and the importance of dialogue in biblical narrative. If you are willing to accept the challenge of *The Art of Bible Translation*, you will be richly rewarded. **M**

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

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *The Art of Bible Translation*. **Author:** Robert Alter. **Publisher:** Princeton University Press, 2019.

Available from Brethren Press.



## Ministerial ethics training uses new workbook

**A** new ministerial ethics workbook is featured in the current renewal cycle for ministry credentialing. Ordained and commissioned ministers across the Church of the Brethren are required to take ministerial ethics advanced-level training every five years in order to renew their credentials. Licensed ministers and those new to the denomination take basic-level training. The training is the responsibility of the Office of Ministry, working with district leaders and ministry commissions.

At the invitation of the Office of Ministry, retired pastor Jim Benedict wrote a workbook titled *Ethics for the Set-Apart Minister*, with versions for both basic and advanced training. He brings expertise in the field of medical ethics and decades serving in pastoral ministry.

Orientation for trainers was held at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., in preparation for the credentialing renewal process currently underway in the districts. Nine leaders from six districts received orientation to serve as facilitators for the process that is to be completed by the end of 2020.

In addition to English, the workbook is available in Spanish with sessions led by Ramón Torres of Reading, Pa.; and in Haitian Kreyol with sessions led by Ilexene Alphonse

of Miami, Fla. Other facilitators include Joe Detrick, Lois Grove, Dave Kerkove, Janet Ober Lambert, Dan Poole, Jim Eikenberry, and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, director of the Office of Ministry.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

*Ministry ethics trainers received orientation: (from left) Janet Ober Lambert of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership; Nancy Sollenberger Heishman of the Office of Ministry; Jim Benedict, author of Ethics for the Set-Apart Minister; Lois Grove; Dan Poole of Bethany Seminary; Joe Detrick; Jim Eikenberry; Ilexene Alphonse who will lead training in Haitian Kreyol; and Ramón Torres who will lead training in Spanish.*

## Seminar seeks creative solutions to violence

**T**he 2019 Christian Citizenship Seminar gathered 47 high school youth and advisors from 14 congregations in 12 states, April 27-May 2 in New York and Washington, D.C. It focused on “Creative Solutions to Violent Conflict

Worldwide” with leadership from the Youth and Young Adult Ministry and Office of Peacebuilding and Policy.

Participants learned about how churches, governments, and non-governmental organizations can proactively build peace and defuse vio-

lence without resorting to military force. In between sessions about the military budget, unarmed civilian protection, and advocacy, participants visited the United Nations, explored New York, and met with their members of Congress on Capitol Hill.

Youth lobbied their senators and representatives to support funding for unarmed civilian protection, a strategy for preventing violence by providing a protective, nonviolent presence to observe and accompany civilians living amid conflict. They also shared how their background as members of a historic peace church informed their desire to see less militarism and more efforts to build peace in foreign policy.



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## Personnel notes

The Church of the Brethren information technology (IT) department has announced two promotions. **Francie Coale** has been named director of IT for the denomination's General Offices and Brethren Service Center after serving as director of IT at the center in New Windsor, Md. She also continues as director of buildings and grounds at the Brethren Service Center. **Fabiola Fernandez** began May 13 as manager of IT at the General Offices, where she had been a system specialist.

**Everett Teetor** resigned effective June 14 as accounting assistant for Brethren Benefit Trust, where he has been employed since July 23, 2018. Previously he was an intern in BBT's finance department. He is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.

**Zoe Vorndran** begins June 24 as intern in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. She graduated from Manchester (Ind.) University this year and while a student was archives assistant for the Funderburg Library. She is a member of Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind.

**Tim Courtright** will begin July 15 as executive director of Camp Swatara near Bethel, Pa. He has been executive director of Kenbrook Bible Camp north of Lebanon, Pa. Camp Swatara also hired **Allison Mattern** of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren as Family Camping Center manager, following the resignation of **Rick and Sarah Balmer**. Mattern holds a degree in environmental science from Slippery Rock University.

## Castañer hosts Heifer's 75th

**G**lobal Mission and Service invites Brethren to a celebration of the 75th anniversary of Heifer International, commemorating its roots in the Church of the Brethren and its historic ties to the community and hospital of Castañer, P.R.

On Friday, Oct. 4, participants will gather in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital city. Saturday, Oct. 5, they will spend the day in Castañer to attend the celebration and tour the hospital. On Sunday, Oct. 6, they will worship



with congregations, return to San Juan, and travel home.

Participants are responsible for their own expenses. Global Mission and Service offers to assist in coordinating flight and hotel bookings and will arrange transportation for

## Leaders issues statement on withdrawal process

**The Leadership Team of the Church of the Brethren** has provided district executives with a congregational withdrawal process. This "best practices" document was developed in consultation with the Council of District Executives in keeping with current polity. It was prepared for district leaders who are working with congregations that may be considering withdrawing from the denomination.

The Leadership Team is not encouraging any congregation to withdraw. If withdrawal becomes necessary, however, this document gives guidance for proceeding in accordance with polity.

The Leadership Team of the denomination includes the Annual Conference officers—moderator Donita Keister, moderator-elect Paul Mundey, and secretary James Beckwith—along with general secretary David Steele and district executive Cindy Sanders, who represents the Council of District Executives.

The "Congregational Withdrawal Process" document does not change Church of the Brethren polity related to property ownership. The intent of the document is to encourage intentional conversations between district leadership and congregations through a defined process, to pull together the denominational polity regarding church property, and to give guidance to ministerial and congregational leadership.

The Leadership Team urges a reconciling spirit in all congregational withdrawal conversations. The document also asks districts to be consistent with all aspects of Church of the Brethren polity as they work with congregations and ministers considering withdrawal, fostering a respectful spirit toward all parties and giving serious attention and care to those church members who choose to remain a part of the Church of the Brethren.

Those seeking more information are to contact their district executive.

## The real holy temple

Wendy McFadden's column about the plastic bags was excellent and timely. When I was a kid my parents said I shouldn't smoke because my body was a holy temple. Our Earth is the real holy temple. We are desecrating it and bringing it down.

God's rewriting of the Ten Commandments would have started with "Care for the Earth!" I appreciate your thoughtful editorial advice in that direction.

**Don Ziegler**  
Henrico, Va.

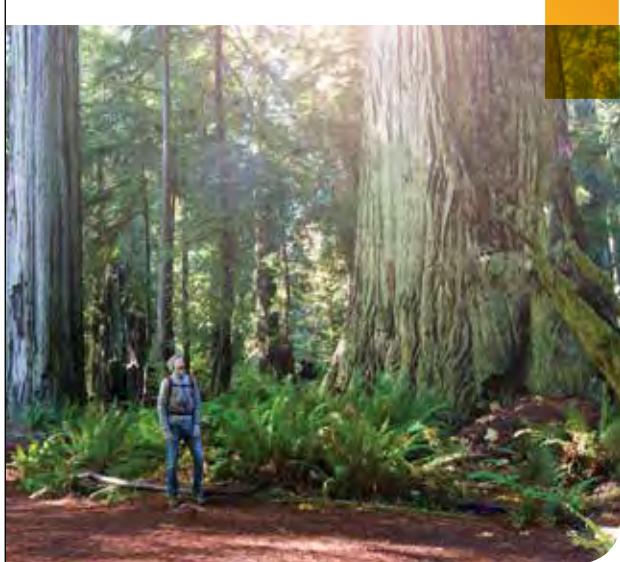
## Seek vision from scripture

A compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren? Could it lie among these scriptures?

Jesus sets a boundary with Mathew 23:23 as he cautions, "You neglect the more important matters

*start small. let faith grow!*

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of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness.” Jesus respects the law but reminds us sharply that law is made for humanity, not the reverse. When law supplants justice, mercy, or faithfulness, how does it serve our Lord’s purpose for goodness?

How often do we focus all our attention on keeping the law? How many of us in the Church of the Brethren

remain convinced we act righteously doing good outreach, disaster ministries, church planting, spiritual renewal, tithing, giving, Bible study, church participation, etc., but cannot welcome in full embrace a tenth of our community’s people because we cannot accept them as born in God’s image?

Jesus’ words in John 13:34-35 point our way: “I give you a new command-

ment: Love one another as I have loved you. . . . If there is this love among you then all will know you are my disciples.” Jesus challenged religious leadership but welcomed social pariahs.

Fishermen, tax collectors, loose women, centurions, lepers, traitors, partiers, thieves, outcasts readily fitted into his friend group. We are known by how we meet and accept one another. When we act with love, as Jesus calls us to do, we then follow a truly righteous path.

Jesus lays down the Greatest Commandment in Mathew 22:34-37, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

What more do we need than to know these two commandments? We love God from whom we are given all good things for life. Then why cannot we look at each other more as God looks at us? If we truly met one another simply as children of God, would we find ourselves dropping the labels? How bright could our faith shine if our “Welcome” signs had no qualifications like, “We love the sinner but hate the sin”?

Acacia trees growing in the desert give us a vision for who we could be as faithful followers of Jesus. They grow by stream beds that might be dry for many years, patiently sending their roots deep into the ground where they find nourishment until sudden rain floods the dry wadi. They are positioned to gain maxi-

## Ministry Summer Service

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

**Interns:** attend a one week orientation in Illinois before serving for 9 weeks somewhere in the United States; receive a \$2,500 scholarship, as well as food, housing, a small monthly stipend, and transportation for the summer.

**Ministry sites:** Send a pastor/mentor to three days of orientation; create an atmosphere for learning, reflection and discernment for the intern; provide food and housing, transportation on the job and a small monthly stipend.

**Mentors:** Join your intern for three days of orientation; spend at least one hour each week offering intentional supervision and mentoring; help to plan and prepare good, engaging work for the intern to invest in during their nine weeks.

**Apply online between now and January 10, 2020!**

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



### CLASSIFIEDS

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

mum benefit of the water. They grow slowly into hard tough trunks and branches. Their tiny leaves provide good dappled shade from desert sun. Acacia lumber is prized for beauty and strength. Its sap provides medicine and salve. Its seed pods feed camels.

The Church of the Brethren originated with a small group of believers who sought Jesus' way for their lives. It grew to share faith by acts of service and relief for communities near and far. Christian schools and missions, Heifer Project, Church World Service, Brethren Volunteer Service, disaster ministries, children's homes, nursing homes, and

hospitals all sprouted from Brethren believers seeking God's direction.

Jesus' words give us plenty of compelling vision.

**Claude Simmons**  
Churchville, Va.

am afraid it may just stop there without discussing the "how" of the problems.

Brethren have never been afraid to disagree with each other. That has been a major strength over the years. There are so many problems the world faces and Brethren have something to say about immigration, social injustice, gay rights, abortion, gun violence, and on and on. So major statements about these issues instead of "visions" and "passion" would excite me more. Embrace disagreement with forbearance as a guide.

**Ronald J. Beahm**  
Anderson, Ind.

## Embrace disagreement

I am a delegate to Annual Conference this year and I am not exactly looking forward to it. I am afraid we are going to be discussing our compelling vision and reclaiming passions without confronting the real issues. We of course must have passions and a vision, but I

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.

## New members

**Bethany**, New Paris, Ind.: Robert Haywood, Carol Helmuth, Emily Herschberger

**Denton**, Md.: Emily Bowdle, Sofia Cotturone, Evan Lloyd, Liam Lloyd

**Faith Community**, New Oxford, Pa.: Daniel Koerner, Judith Koerner, Bonnie Stevens, Glenn Stevens, Dorothy Trimmer

**First**, Roaring Spring, Pa.: Adam Baird, Tori Delozier, Jack Myers, Liliana Padilla, Nittany Smith

**Hanover**, Pa.: Martha Lerew, Bailey Sanders

**Heidelberg**, Myerstown, Pa.: Maria Heisey

**Lakeview**, Brethren, Mich.: Joseph Shoup

**Lancaster**, Pa.: Mary Lou Hare, Charles Matz, Ken Matz, Pat Matz, Sally Matz, Andrew Nye, Marcia Purrell, Janet Rhen, Jim Rhen, Liduvina Rodriguez,

Efigenia Vargas, Logan Wenger  
**Lititz**, Pa.: Robert Fahnestock, Sylvia Fahnestock, Chad Minnich, Donna Minnich, Ann Oswald, Alexis Rohrer, Tim Rohrer, Lisa Trobaugh, Scott Trobaugh, Heather Wolf  
**Maple Grove**, Ashland, Ohio: Delbert Kettering  
**Mohler**, Ephrata, Pa.: Jordan Leonard, Frank S. Martin, Nick Schaivo  
**Ninth Street**, Roanoke, Va.: Pat Frier, George Shockley

## Wedding anniversaries

**Blackburn**, Richard and Joyce, Port Republic, Va., 50  
**Brown**, Chuck and Andrea, Oaks, Pa., 50  
**Claytor**, Dallas and Peggy, Dayton, Va., 68  
**Downs**, Earl and Janet, Harrisonburg, Va., 50  
**Frye**, John and Janice, Hagerstown, Md., 65  
**Gearhart**, Mitch and Beverly, Hagerstown, Md., 60  
**Grabb**, Terry and Sue, Washington, Ill., 50  
**Haag**, Max and Dorothy, South Bend, Ind., 65  
**Houser**, Keim and Sylvia, South Bend, Ind., 55  
**Hovis**, Mike and Nancy, Smithsburg, Md., 60  
**Knotts**, Ray and Kitty,

Edwards, Ill., 50  
**Kopp**, Galen and Lilli Ann, Mount Joy, Pa., 50  
**Miller**, Jim and Mary, Bridgewater, Va., 50  
**Mummert**, Ron and Connie, Walkerton, Ind., 50  
**Nesselrodt**, Randy and Donna, Penn Laird, Va., 50  
**Oller**, Archie and Connie, Hanover, Pa., 50  
**Poling**, Ed and Marge, Hagerstown, Md., 50  
**Stockslager**, Robert and Betty, Hanover, Pa., 50  
**Vanderveer**, Loyal and Sue, Boonsboro, Md., 55  
**Wray**, Benton and Diane, Callaway, Va., 50

## Deaths

**Balsbaugh**, Martha E., 72, Myerstown, Pa., April 18  
**Brian**, Dorothy Maxine Leckrone, 98, Brethren, Mich., March 31  
**Brumbaugh**, Elizabeth E., 98, Martinsburg, Pa., March 4  
**Davis**, Carl Dean, Sr., 85, Greensburg, Pa., April 16  
**Erbaugh**, Margaret Virginia Flory, 91, Bridgewater, Va., April 9  
**Evans**, Lucille Morehouse, 92, Goshen, Ind., March 31  
**Flory**, Lucille Margaret Brunk, 96, Bridgewater, Va., April 13  
**Flory**, Mary Louise Lourash, 82, Defiance, Ohio, April 16  
**Good**, Monroe C., 95,

Lancaster, Pa., May 3  
**Grossnickle**, Shirley Ann Wachter, 79, Union Bridge, Md., April 23  
**Hamilton**, Robert Bruce, 76, Hanover, Mich., Nov. 21  
**Hinkle**, Ronald L., 81, Dayton, Va., Jan. 15  
**Hodgson**, Gayla A., 95, Waterloo, Iowa, May 8  
**Hylton**, Gladys A. Stehman, 91, Lititz, Pa., April 10  
**Layman**, Maxine Elizabeth Kiracofe, 99, Bridgewater, Va., April 8  
**Mallott**, Donna Erbaugh, 91, Pittsburgh, Pa., April 4  
**McClintock**, Mary Virginia Burroughs, 91, Somerset, Pa., April 2

**Myers**, Gerald Eugene, Sr., 88, Port Republic, Va., March 20  
**Myers**, James D., 85, Goshen, Ind., March 19  
**Patches**, Alta G., 84, Myerstown, Pa., May 5  
**Petcher**, Paul W., 96, Chatom, Ala., May 12  
**Pruden**, Mary Foutz Radcliff, 96, Blue Ridge, Va., April 16  
**Raines**, Jackson Marshall, Jr., 71, McGaheysville, Va., March 4  
**Ritchie**, Janie Long, 68, Harrisonburg, Va., May 15  
**Rogers**, Clifford B., 81, Corryton, Tenn., April 23  
**Rutko**, Walter, 87, Harleysville, Pa., April 6  
**Scott**, Thelma E. Smith, 102,

New Oxford, Pa., May 12  
**Smith**, Arthur E., Jr., 100, Ashland, Ohio, April 10  
**Stepp**, Harold Bruce, 90, Waynesboro, Va., May 5  
**Stimely**, Marian J., 94, McVeytown, Pa., March 7  
**Wampler**, D. Gene, 83, Harleysville, Pa., April 24  
**Williard**, Mary Beatrice, 86, Clemmons, N.C., May 7

## Licensed

**Carico**, Mark, Southeastern Dist. (First, Mount Airy, N.C.), May 5  
**Gingrich**, Ross, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.), May 5

## Placements

**Bernhard**, Fred, interim pastor, Brookville, Ohio, Jan. 1  
**Carico**, Mark, pastor, First, Mount Airy, N.C., May 5  
**Fleener**, Tim, from pastor, Richland, Pa., to pastor, Akron, Pa., April 29  
**Gingrich**, Ross, team minister, Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa., March 16  
**Hornbacker**, Tara, interim pastor, New Carlisle, Ohio, April 21  
**Krouse**, Robert, interim pastor, West York, York, Pa., April 1  
**Rittle**, Matthew, from pastor, Franklin Grove, Ill., to pastor, Arlington, Va., May 1

## TURNINGPOINTS

# Proclaim all of Christ

**M**y grandfather and I shared a name: Emmett. We shared more than that, too: a quiet demeanor, a love of nature, an interest in crossword puzzles. But our bond always started with the name—Emmett, the Hebrew word for truth. We could be huddled over a crossword or watching the Nationals—his team—on TV, when we'd hear my grandmother croon "Emmett!" from the other room, and we'd look up and shout back "What?" in unison. It never got old. She was always calling for him, but I liked to play along.

For all we had in common, we had a lot more that made us different. We grew up during different times, of course, but we also lived in different states and different types of communities. We saw politics differently, saw God differently, and I never could bring myself to root for his Nationals. I was woefully inept at the labor he always seemed to be doing on his land; I had no talent for gardening or weeding, nor splitting and stacking wood, nor tapping maples for syrup. When I call my grand-

mother now, she's happy to hear from me, but the caller ID is also a reminder of the Emmett she doesn't have anymore, of all the memories she has invested in my name but not my person.

The Church of the Brethren can feel like two bodies with one name, too. We have more in common than just a name—the way we baptize, our practice of love feast, our heritage as a faith tradition. Yet we have plenty that makes us different, from the way we read scripture to the people we agree to welcome. We also have different talents: for justice, for service, for evangelism, for witness, for vision, for resilience. These aren't small differences,



EMMETT  
WITKOVSKY-ELDRED

and they feel bigger every day. When people call upon our church, they might receive two very different answers to that call.

The question, now, is whether we can be one Church of the Brethren, or if that project would be as futile as asking my grandfather and me to be the same Emmett. What vision compels us to a faithful and fruitful ministry together? Does such a vision even exist? And do we have the eyes to see it?

If there is hope for bringing together two bodies with one name, it lies in one body with many names. During the 2019 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, we are admonished to "Proclaim Christ," but that, too, can be harder than it sounds. After all, Christ gives us a lot to proclaim. He is the gentle shepherd, but he is also the pasture gate. He is an infant born into oppression, a toddler asylum-seeker, a precocious child teaching scripture. He is the one who flips over tables and the one who passes the bread and cup of his life around the table to his friends and enemy. He is the mighty king who separates sheep from goats, yet he is also the lowly poor, sick, or taboo person whose treatment determines who the sheep and goats are. He is a rabbi, but also a rabble-rousing, revolutionary radical. The Savior who died to swipe us from death, and the teacher who showed us how to live.

Christ is many more things than I could ever list in a column. And which Christ we choose to proclaim usually has a lot to do with which Church of the Brethren we happen to attend. But being one church must mean proclaiming all of Christ, both the parts that feel familiar and the parts we find challenging. Will we be one whole church, proclaiming one whole Christ? Or will we be a broken church, proclaiming the smaller Christs reflected in the scattered shards of a broken mirror? 

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

**BEING ONE CHURCH MUST MEAN PROCLAMING ALL OF CHRIST, BOTH THE PARTS THAT FEEL FAMILIAR AND THE PARTS WE FIND CHALLENGING.**

# United: Seeking the mind of Christ



## Mission Offering

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

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other [as] Christ Jesus.”

~Romans 15:5, NIV



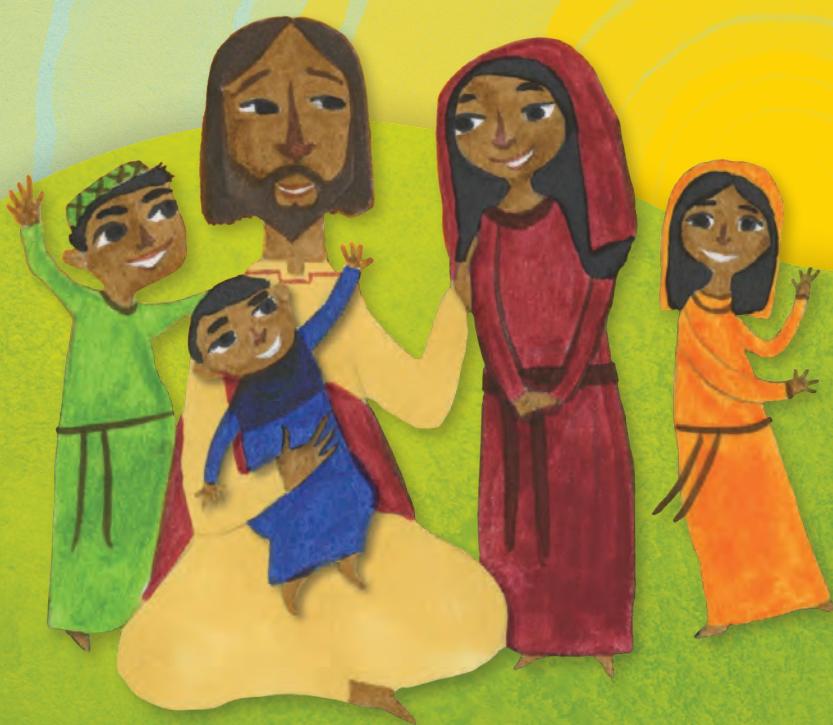
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