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*'We have put
our hearts on
the table'*



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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



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on the cover

Photo by Glenn Riegel

Correction: Pam Warner Franklin's congregation was wrongly identified in the June issue, p. 8. She is a member of Empire Church of the Brethren in Modesto, Calif.

What can we do?

In early August, I happened across these words from the late Warren Groff:

We face unprecedented social challenges nowadays. The war continues in Vietnam. People are hungry in a country that spends millions to store its surplus food. We are surrounded by the latest conveniences. . . . But the same technology that makes all this possible is alienating us from the earth; it is choking our lakes and streams; it is polluting the very air we breathe. Racist attitudes and institutions; not only offend our sense of justice and fair play, they block the emergence of the open communities required by a technological society. The gap between developed and developing nations grows wider. Older forms of colonialism are replaced by new patterns of economic imperialism.

Substitute another country for Vietnam, and Groff’s words from 1971 are painfully accurate almost 50 years later. Racism, militarism, poverty, and power were the fault lines under the headlines then and still are now.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

Today’s paragraph might look like this: Our children today have never known a time when the US was not at war. Climate change causes more damage every day, and its effects are harshest on the poor. The gap between poor and rich is immorally vast. The people crowding our southern border are fleeing conditions created by our own country, as we can see when we recall the history of Central America. It has become harder to deny that racism infects all parts of our society.

Perhaps Groff’s words seemed especially acute because I read them two days after El Paso and Dayton—two more cities joining the shorthand hashtags of gun violence. So far in 2019, there have been more mass shootings in the US than days in the year. Almost all the shooters are young white men. Hate has become normalized, and there are more triggers, literally, than people. We Americans are shooting ourselves.

The nation is sitting on a massive fault line of our own making; this impending earthquake is not an act of God. The temblors and aftershocks of our unstable ground are warnings of a society in crisis.

What can we do? We must do many things all at once. Yes to thinking and praying. Yes to background checks. Yes to a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Yes to reducing the number of guns. Yes to fair treatment of immigrants. Yes to racial justice. Yes to denouncing white supremacy.

No to becoming accustomed to these tragedies. And yes to boldly living out Jesus’ way of peace.

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“And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord’s offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service.”

—Exodus 35:21

...by the numbers

2,155 Registration including 677 delegates and 1,478 nondelegates

233 Recorded annual meetings of the Church of the Brethren

165 Pints collected onsite by the Annual Conference Blood Drive

6 New congregations and projects: **Faith in Action Church of the Brethren**, Northern Ohio District; **Floyd Iglesia Cristiana Nueva Vida**, Virgina District; **Hanging Rock Church of the Brethren**, West Marva District; **Living Stream Church of the Brethren**, Pacific Northwest District; **Veritas Church of the Brethren** and the **Ebenezer project**, Atlantic Northeast District

2 Percent annual increase of the minimum cash salary table for pastors in 2020

... by the dollars

\$50,928.49

Total offerings during worship including: **\$13,212.01** for Brethren Disaster Ministries work in Puerto Rico; **\$11,383.41** for the denomination’s core ministries; **\$11,152.16** for church rebuilding in Nigeria; **\$8,171.35** for child care and age group activities at Annual Conference; **\$7,009.56** for Calling the Called workshops in the districts, sponsored by the Office of Ministry

\$7,595 Raised for hunger relief by the Association for the Arts Quilt Auction

\$2,500 Donated by the convention center in Grand Rapids, Mich., for an ice cream social “thank you” for returning again in 2020

\$2,360 Online donations

\$1,312 Offering for ministers’ assistance received by the Minister’s Association

Many happy returns

When it comes to Annual Conference, Brethren have been like the swallows of Capistrano, returning to the same sites numerous times over a period of years. Early annual meetings were held mostly in Pennsylvania, especially at the Coventry and Conewago congregations; in Maryland at Pipe Creek; and in the Shenandoah Valley. Since the latter 1800s favorite spots have included Hershey, Pa., with eight visits, most recently in 1936; Ocean Grove, N.J., most recently in 1968, and Winona Lake, Ind., most recently in 1935, with seven visits each; and North Manchester, Ind., with five visits, most recently in 1945. Recent spots may be vying with those sites: Greensboro, N.C., hosted in 2016 and 2019 and is on the books again for 2021. Grand Rapids, Mich., hosted in 2011 and 2017 and will again next summer. It was also the host city back in 1955. —Walt Wiltschek

Remembering Warren Groff, 1924–2019

by Jenny Williams

Warren F. Groff, fifth president of Bethany Theological Seminary, died June 23. At his inauguration in 1976, he was characterized as a “perceptive scholar, careful administrator, ardent churchman, skillful wordsmith, and devoted family man.” A memorial service was held Aug. 10 at York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill.

Groff was associate professor of religion at Bridgewater (Va.) College 1954-1958, before his call to join the Bethany faculty as associate professor of theology. He was named dean and professor of theology at the seminary beginning in 1962, as Bethany was preparing to move from Chicago to Oak Brook, Ill.

As dean, Groff took a leading role in redesigning the curriculum, featuring a small-group colloquial structure as the core of the master of divinity program. He was instrumental in creation of a doctor of ministry program; the program standards were adopted by the National Council of Churches (NCC) and followed by other seminaries. During his tenure Bethany entered into cross-registration partnerships with other Chicago-area seminaries and began offering a master of arts in theology jointly with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Earlham School of Religion.

In 1975, Groff was unanimously selected by the search committee to become Bethany’s next president, the first from among the seminary faculty, and served until his retirement in 1989. Highlights of his presidency included growth of the doctor of ministry program, with the first degree awarded a year after he took office. Education for a Shared Ministry was founded in 1977, followed by Training in Ministry in 1984, both non-degree ministry programs for lay leaders that continue today through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

Groff’s early years as president saw Bethany transition to a self-funded agency with strong enrollment and generous financial support. The first endowed chairs were funded, honoring Alvin Brightbill and Albert and David Wieand, and a major gift established a peace studies program. Groff initiated a renewal of Bethany’s music program, which featured tours with a mixed choir, instrumental ensemble, and handbell choir. The seminary celebrated its 75th year in 1980.

Originally from Harleysville, Pa., Groff was ordained in the Church of the Brethren in 1947 and served as a pastor for two years before earning his bachelor of arts degree from Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., in 1949. He received a degree from Yale Divinity School in 1952 and a doctorate from Yale University in 1955, and was a visiting scholar at Harvard University 1965-1966.



Groff was moderator of Annual Conference in 1979. During the 1960s and ’70s, he was a member of the Faith and Order Commissions of the NCC and the World Council of Churches (WCC) and was a delegate to the Fourth World Assembly of the WCC in 1968. He was president of the American Theological Society in 1972-1973. He held key positions on the Commissions of Accrediting and Revision of Standards of the Association of Theological Schools and was a member of the American Academy of Religion.

Between 1947 and 1994 he wrote more than 50 articles and was a contributing author to five books. He wrote *Christ the Hope of the Future*, *Story Time: God’s Story and Ours*, and *Prayer: God’s Time and Ours!*, and co-authored, with longtime fellow faculty member Donald Miller, *The Shaping of Modern Christian Thought*. ❧

Jenny Williams is director of communications for Bethany Theological Seminary.

God's story

“We tell the story not only *because* we live it but *in order to* live it. Indeed, to tell it as our story is to live it. The focus of the story is not upon our virtues, our heroism, or our discipleship. Its focus is upon God’s purpose and the outworkings of that purpose as the story unfolds. Its focus is upon the Storyteller, upon his intentions and his initiatives as they shape our own.”

—from *Story Time: God’s Story and Ours*, by Warren F. Groff (Brethren Press, 1974)



Conference focuses on compelling vision conversations

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Compelling vision conversations were the highlight of the 2019 Annual Conference held July 3-7 in Greensboro, N.C. Most other business was set aside for the process, intended to help Brethren discern a vision to guide the denomination into the future. Moderator Donita Keister, moderator-elect Paul Munday, and secretary James Beckwith presided.

Large amounts of data were collected from some 120 table groups of delegates and nondelegates in response to a series of questions. Groups of six to eight people spent hours over three days discussing questions posed by the Compelling Vision Process Team.

The team chaired by Rhonda Pittman Gingrich included Keister, Munday, Michaela Alphonse, Kevin Daggett, Brian Messler, Alan Stucky, Kay Weaver, Samuel Sarpiya as past moderator, and Conference director Chris Douglas. In coming months they will assess the data that has been gathered, working with the Compelling Vision Working Group that includes the three moderators, Douglas, general secretary David Steele, and district executives Colleen Michael of Pacific Northwest and John Jantzi of Shenandoah. The goal is to bring a vision statement for consideration by the 2020 Conference.

Questions were repeated verbally and displayed on large screens in English, Spanish, and Haitian Kreyol. Tables each had a facilitator and a recorder who typed responses on computer tablets provided by CoVision, a company whose services were engaged to facilitate the tech-heavy data col-

lection process. As responses were typed in they were recorded automatically, numbered, and collected throughout the three days. Tables were encouraged to submit each idea expressed as an individual entry, but also entered group responses. Responses were not identified by table unless the recorder included that information. After each session, tablets were handed around the tables for people to type individual evaluations to help the team identify what was working, what problems arose, and make adjustments.

As responses showed up on their monitors, the team had a few minutes to create a “snapshot” of the responses to share with the Conference following each question. Pittman Gingrich described it as “a little like drinking water from a fire hose.” Just a few minutes after the first question was asked, for example, some 850 responses already had been received. A comprehensive report will not be made until after those assessing the data have a chance to read and reflect on each of the thousands of responses. That will not happen until later this year, she said.

Keister acknowledged anxiety that the process did not address concerns about division in the church. “I assure you that this work is happening around our division, on a parallel track,” she said. “We are not kicking the can down the road. . . . Leadership is aware of the elephants all around us.”

A love feast followed, open to all present. It was the first time in many decades that love feast has been celebrated by the full Annual Conference.

Find the index with full coverage of the 2019 Conference at www.brethren.org/ac/2019/coverage.

Coverage of Annual Conference was provided by press team volunteers and communications staff: Laura Brown, Keith Hollenberg, Donna Parcell, Frank Ramirez, Alane Riegel, Glenn Riegel, Jan Fischer Bachman and Russ Otto from the website staff, and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford as director of News Services.



Glenn Ringel

Compelling vision conversations

'We have put our hearts on the table'

by Frances Townsend

What on earth are we getting into?" may have been the question on a lot of minds as we found our tables. The business session opened with singing "Open our eyes," a prayer asking for God to bring illumination and to make us willing to receive it. But singing this is not the same as willingly saying the prayer. Are we willing to receive new illumination? Am I willing?

I came with my fears and hopes for this compelling vision process, as we all did. But I also hope for the holy moment that takes me way beyond my own thinking. The Holy Spirit, after all, is loose in the room.



Every table is equipped with a tablet computer to record the many answers to each question and send them to the process team for compilation. After each discussion period, the process team is able to give us a few "snapshot" answers other tables had come up with. Often our table had enjoyed rich discussion with several good ideas, and yet the answers that were lifted up from other tables never came up at all at ours. We joked that we would need to come up with pithier statements to get quoted by the process team—but it was also good to hear the wide range of

ideas and realize that other groups at their own tables might be nudged by the Spirit in very different ways.



The first question we were asked was how we envision our church in 10 years. In that future church, what do we hope "the manner of our living" conveys to the world? For older folks—me included—pushing this out 10 years means thinking about how the church will look when we are not running it. It forces the answer to be more corporate, more dependent on everybody working together.

I was challenged by one of the answers to this question that Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, chair of the process team, read from another table's response: that the church should be worthy of persecution. What a response! Way beyond getting the approval of the secular society around us, and more focused on the way of Christ and on his approval. It was a reminder that we are always going to be on the edge if we are really being the church.



We were asked to describe a Christ-centered ministry we have seen in another congregation or the wider church that makes us hopeful about the future. Our answers all con-



tained some element of breaking through our regular social circles. Most included youth. We were not just repeating the old notion that the kids are the future of the church, as if they are supposed to inherit our way of being church, but we were beginning to get at another truth that is about listening to them and finding out how God already is active in their lives and using them in the world.

About Brethren ordinances and practices. . . . What do our practices convey about our priorities and passions as Christ's disciples? These markers of identity were cherished by those of us around the table who were not born into the church just as much as by those who have a generations-deep Brethren identity. But our discussion wandered quickly afield as we thought about things besides ordinances, such as conscientious objection. Standing for what we believe in as Brethren—even when the world does not understand—is definitely a way to convey our priorities and passions.

“What foundations are core to forming a Christ-centered community and why? Cite biblical passages that apply” produced a rich discussion at my table and many scripture citations. I realized something was connecting deep within me, something more than just nice answers to a “test” question. In Mark 10:28-30, Jesus promised the disciples that the loss of family and friends when they became his

followers would be outstripped by the gift of community that would be theirs. This text has long been my foundation for seeing the church as God's blessing to me, as a God-given community.

At one point the moderator acknowledged a concern shared by many that this process is just avoiding the “elephant in the room,” or the roots of division among us in the Church of the Brethren. So each person was invited to name an “elephant” and to write in a few words what that might be for them. Leaders want to understand this better, since different people may have different core concerns, and they may not actually be the same. The tablet computer at my table was passed around to each of us in turn to name our “elephant” and send it in to the process team. That data will not be reported but will help inform church leadership. Even though the table discussion has helped us trust one another and be vulnerable to each other, it felt appropriate for this question to be privately answered.

Consider two of the core scriptures of the church, the great commission to go forth and baptize and make disciples, and the great commandment to love God with heart,



I CAME WITH MY FEARS AND HOPES FOR THIS COMPELLING VISION PROCESS, AS WE ALL DID. BUT I ALSO HOPE FOR THE HOLY MOMENT THAT TAKES ME WAY BEYOND MY OWN THINKING. **THE HOLY SPIRIT, AFTER ALL, IS LOOSE IN THE ROOM.**



Keith Hellberg

soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. How does each of these shape Christ-centered, servant ministry?

They were hard questions, and at that point we really wanted to start “chasing squirrels” to distract ourselves. It was not just because we were so tired, but because we did not want to separate the great commission from the great commandment, as the computer was set up to do. We wanted to hold them together, loving neighbor enough to want to share our relationship with God so that the neighbor could also be blessed.

Questions like those we were asked today may sound simple, but before we know it, we have put our hearts on the table for the group to hold.



Big dreams are in order as we realize that Jesus has been calling and equipping us to serve the hurting world. We were asked to describe some specific needs of the world that our denomination may be called to address, given our gifts and passions. We were asked to name some huge—even overwhelming—concerns that the church, working together, might begin to address. . . . Then we were asked to think of “Big Ideas”—the kind that should be capitalized, like Brethren Volunteer Service, which was a Big Idea when it was first proposed. These should be ideas that surprise us with their boldness, ideas that meet big needs of the world in ways that use our gifts, and that even change the church as we carry them out.



The wrap-up question again asked us to envision what the church might look like in 10 years as we imagine these ideas taking place, and a compelling vision is carried out.

Would it look like what we had imagined when we were asked this same question on the first day? What will it take to become that church we imagine?

Ideas surfaced, such as deep spiritual commitment and re-establishing trust. Some of us were envisioning new people in our churches, not just because evangelism is our job and not just because the amount of work requires more workers. If we are doing mission right, it is not just a hand-out but a hand of welcome extended—an invitation to join us in community as our brothers and sisters. The new people in that church 10 years from now also will be receivers of the Holy Spirit’s gifts and ideas, just like us. Their presence will change the church as the Holy Spirit moves in them.



The compelling vision process gave an opportunity to be heard, and it also gave many opportunities to find hope: in our identity, in our love for one another, in the leading of the Spirit.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich quoted some of the evaluation responses from the tables. Knowing that almost every table was composed of people with diverse views gave additional meaning to one person’s statement that if the eight people at their table could have this conversation, then maybe the denomination could as well.

But maybe eight was not their actual number. Wasn’t there one more participant at each table? As another response said, “I could feel the life of Christ in this room.” 

Frances Townsend, a pastor from Michigan, served on the Annual Conference press team and was “embedded” at a nondelegate table to help cover the compelling vision conversations. Find links to her daily journal entries and the full onsite coverage of the 2019 Conference at www.brethren.org/ac/2019/coverage.

THE COMPELLING VISION PROCESS GAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD, AND IT ALSO GAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO FIND HOPE: IN OUR IDENTITY, IN OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER, IN THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT.

A tale of two tables

Feeling betrayed by Tyler Roebuck

My experience as a delegate was filled with drama and borne of trauma and hurt, built to a high, and then ended in disappointment.

I came to Annual Conference as a volunteer writer for the press team. Early on the first day my mother texted to inform me of the passing of a member at our congregation, Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. Our church delegate and his carload of people turned around and headed for home. I became the only member of my church to remain in Greensboro and took over as delegate. Over the course of an hour, my plans dramatically changed and for the first time I took on the serious role of delegate with zero preparation. The self-imposed stress was overwhelming.

Upon arriving at my delegate table Thursday morning, I still felt I was struggling to stay afloat in my own sea of apprehension, looking desperately for a lifeboat and allies to hang on to. I fully admit, I was more interested in finding people on “my side” than I was in anything to do with the compelling vision process.

By the grace of God one of my tablemates was a good friend, which made the whole process easier. It became obvious that our table shared very different and even opposing views on many key issues, but my role as the table recorder alleviated my anxiety. I could still take part in discussion but had a distraction to ease the tension.

In the early discussions, I felt as though there were unspoken tensions and apprehensions at the table. But as we progressed, we grew closer with each other. A key moment, I felt, came when we were discussing building trust. I shared with my tablemates how vulnerability is a key component in trust and shared my struggles with thoughts of suicide and depression. This, I believe, really opened the group up to more heartfelt and vulnerable dialogue, and I felt we finally got somewhere.

When we finished the process, I believed we had reached some common ground—even all the way across the spectrum of beliefs that is the church.

That is why I was greatly disappointed when some members of our table elected not to attend love feast, saying that they felt they were not in right relationship with the wider body. My heart sank. We had spent so much time and energy and heartfelt emotion working together to achieve what I perceived to be progress, only to have the rug pulled out from under us in what felt like a pre-determined decision.

I walked away from Annual Conference feeling betrayed, like the whole process was for naught. 

Tyler Roebuck is a member of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren and has served as a young adult writer on the Annual Conference press team.

The story of ND9 by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

We shared what was on our hearts, the words that were needed,” said Bob Johnson, one of those seated at Nondelegate Table Number Nine—known in the common parlance of the 2019 Annual Conference as “ND9.”

By the close of compelling vision conversations, this table that had a rocky start marked by feelings of isolation over their differences had become a group that wanted to love each other. ND9 offered to share their story publicly because they felt their transformative experience could be helpful to others and demonstrates the possibilities of the process.

In addition to Johnson, who pastors Middle River Church of the Brethren in New Hope, Va., those participating in the interview included Bobbi Dykema, pastor at First Church of the Brethren in Springfield, Ill.; Kenton Grossnickle from Myersville, Md.; and Carolyn Schrock



from McPherson, Kan. Two table members had to leave before the interview.

The group was careful to acknowledge not every table had a transformative experience. They heard reports from

tables where the experience had been painful throughout. However, if one table could be surprised by unexpected relationship-building, perhaps there is hope for others—perhaps even the whole denomination.

The members of ND9 came to the compelling vision conversations with their own feelings and thoughts, and at times with ill feelings toward each other. Over the course of three days their journey toward what ended up being “a wonderful way of listening” as Johnson put it, was not easy. Some hurtful things were said, even if they were honest. After the first day, one person said they wished another person wasn’t at the table. Another person was feeling pushed out, and finally told that to the group.

By the second day, things began to change. The honest expression of feelings—however hurtful—created a new possibility for openness and acceptance. “It’s so powerful to let you feel what you feel and say what you say and still love each other,” Johnson described it.

By the third day, the group decided to wash feet together during the love feast. When the time came for footwashing, they went as a group, inviting Johnson’s wife to join them. Each person in the group washed every other person’s feet.

The love and servanthood they expressed did not change who they were as people, and did not change their opinions, Dykema noted. But it was a symbol of a new willingness to be vulnerable to each other. “Our ideology hasn’t changed but our togetherness has,” she said.

Surprisingly, one of the things that brought the group together was a common concern for creation care—an issue usually assumed to be extremely divisive. The table shared concern for farmers in their communities: some grew up on farms, others are enthusiastic gardeners. They also shared a heart for trauma victims and people with addictions.

“We love each other despite our differences,” said Grossnickle, who noted that distrust was an obstacle they had to overcome from the start. He blamed the distrust on their fear of differences. It is important to understand that perfect love casts out fear, he said, adding that it was helpful to realize they could listen to each other without fear.

“After our rocky time, I was praying that God would help us and then I felt the Spirit move among us,” said Schrock.

ND9 hopes the Holy Spirit will move in the same way among the wider church—in Dykema’s words, that the Spirit may “write this large.” 

Not the first

Conversations in the Church of the Brethren

The compelling vision process is not the first denomination-wide conversation undertaken by the Church of the Brethren. Those with long memories will recall, and perhaps took part in, one or more of the following:

Goals for the '80s: This goal-setting process based on Micah 6:8 was led by staff of the General Board—predecessor of the Mission and Ministry Board. Every congregation and district was invited to participate in the process, which was based on a vigorous Bible study that took at least a year. The General Board staff engaged in its own group Bible study over several months. Responses were collated by the general secretary’s office, and the statement was presented to the 1979 Annual Conference for approval. (Source: MESSENGER reports from 1979)

Goals for the '90s: Also carried out by General Board staff, this process included a funding element encouraging

financial commitment by congregations to the goals for the decade. The church was challenged to raise at least \$2.5 million and to call at least 5,000 Brethren Volunteer Service workers to accomplish the goals. The goals were adopted in 1988 and the Conference voted in 1989 to support them. The funding was to cover work in youth ministries, evangelism, family life, international mission, congregational partnerships, and mission interpretation. (Source: MESSENGER reports from 1989)

Together Conversations: Initiated in 2003 by a statement from the district executives identifying fragmentation, this process sought church-wide renewal. Brethren Press published a study guide, and more than 140 people from across the church were trained to facilitate small-group conversations in their own areas. The 2006 Annual Conference engaged in four half-hour discussion sessions and related events.

Brethren Press published a final report, *What We Said, What We Heard, and Why It Matters*, available at www.brethrenpress.com.

Special Response Process: In this process, carried out from 2009 to 2011, district delegates to Standing Committee led small-group conversations in each district. Use of the five-step “special response” decision-making process, created to address highly controversial matters, was prompted by two business items related to sexuality that came to Annual Conference: “A Statement of Confession and Commitment” and “Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships.” The 2011 Conference returned both items and reaffirmed the 1983 “Statement on Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective.” (Source: Newslines report at www.brethren.org/news/2011/delegates-act-on-special-response.html)—**Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**

Sermons

“We are not compelled by our love for Christ. We are compelled by Christ’s love for us. . . . May we come as ministers of reconciliation . . . knowing that a vision born of that commitment cannot help but be compelling.”

— Donita Keister, Annual Conference moderator



“The Romans 8 text is not just about the world to come. It’s got past tense, present tense, and future tense. It’s about our redemption, but also the redemption of all creation.”

— Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and communications for the Church of the Brethren

“How do you feel about the people outside the scope of your church? . . . We call them lost, unbelievers, all sorts of names. . . . When folks gather around your church in your community, are those ‘your’ people or are they ‘those’ people?”

— Jonathan Prater, pastor of Mount Zion Church of the Brethren in Linville, Va.



“The place of peace is actually a person of peace. The only lasting source of peace is God.”

— Joel Peña, pastor of Alpha and Omega Church of the Brethren in Lancaster, Pa.

“Jesus wants us to realize that we cannot separate worship of God from worship in community. How can we love God . . . if we cannot love people in all their familiarity and familiarity?”

— Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey, pastors of Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren



“If we do not live in the spirit of footwashing we have no part with him. . . . Jesus’ servanthood is our example in our relationship with each other. . . . God’s will for our lives is that we learn to give ourselves in service to others.”

— Christina Singh, pastor of Freeport (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

“We cannot serve our neighbors if we stay stuck in the Brethren bubble. Get out there!”

— Jeremy Ashworth, pastor of Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz.



“Look around at the marginalized and outcast people in your communities . . . and inspire the transformation that will come if we live out the gospel of Christ. . . . Sisters and brothers, it is a great day to be a follower of Jesus, and it is a great day to be Brethren.”

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



Paul Munday receives the gavel from Donita Keister.

Elections

The Conference chose **David Sollenberger** as moderator-elect after nominations from the floor forced a run-off election for the positions of moderator-elect and Mission and Ministry Board Area 4. Sollenberger will serve a year as moderator-elect, and then preside over the 2021 Conference. He is a videographer from Annville, Pa., and a member of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee

Carol Hipps Elmore, Salem, Va.

Mission and Ministry Board

Area 4: J. Roger Schrock, McPherson, Kan. Area 5: Don Morrison, Nampa, Idaho. *Appointments affirmed:* Heather Gentry Hartwell, Harrisonburg, Va.;

Paul V. Schrock, Indianapolis, Ind.; John Michael Hoffman, McPherson, Kan.

Bethany Seminary board of trustees

Representing the colleges: Monica Rice, McPherson, Kan. *Appointments affirmed:* Eric Bishop of Pomona, Calif.; S. Phillip Stover, McPherson, Kan.; Wendi Hutchinson Ailor, West Lafayette, Ind.

Brethren Benefit Trust

board of directors

Audrey Myer, Elizabethtown, Pa. *Appointments affirmed:* Donna McKee Rhodes, Huntingdon, Pa.; Russell Matteson, Modesto, Calif.

On Earth Peace board

Carla L. Gillespie, Tipp City, Ohio *Appointments affirmed:* Caitlin Haynes, Baltimore, Md.; Lucas Al-Zoughbi, Lansing, Mich.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

Appointment affirmed: Terry Grove, Winter Springs, Fla.

Keith Hollenberg



Glenn Riegel



“Move in our midst, thou Spirit of God”

The business portion of Annual Conference concluded with love feast, which included the familiar movements of examination, simple meal, footwashing, and communion. Bread for the meal came from loaves brought from across the church. The elements of communion were grape juice and squares of traditional Brethren communion bread.

The two-hour service was filled with prayerful singing, including Ken Morse’s lyrics, “Strike from our feet the fetters that bind. Lift from our lives the weight of our wrong. Teach us to love with heart, soul, and mind. Spirit of God, thy love makes us strong.”

Donna Parcell



Keith Hollenberg



Glenn Riegel



Laura Brown





Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Donna Parcel

Keith Hollenberg



Donna Parcel



Keith Hollenberg



Donna Parcel



Glenn Riegel

CREATION AND THE CROSS

by Wendy McFadden

Romans 8:18-25 and Psalm 36:5-6

One day, when I was a child, my mother returned from a trip and told the family about a conversation she'd had on the plane. The woman next to her had never flown before and was curious about what she could see out the window.

"What are all those dark spots on the ground?" the woman asked.

"Those are shadows from the clouds," my mother explained. "For people in those dark spots, it's a cloudy day." The woman had never thought about the sun and the clouds and the earth in quite that way. Thirty thousand feet up in the air was a totally different point of view than she could imagine when her feet were on the ground.

That lesson in perspective returns to me every once in a while. Even though I know that God isn't flying around in the sky, I wonder if God doesn't sometimes listen to us and think, "Well, from up here it looks quite different." He did say that in the book of Job:

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7)

This is the opening salvo of four chapters of God putting Job in his place. In a sense, it's another creation story, an account of how it is God alone who established the world and who determines the habits of the goat and the deer, the hawk and the eagle, the mighty leviathan. It is God who holds the storehouses of the snow and hail, whose womb is the source of ice and who begets the dew.

The imagery here is vigorous and memorable. The words have to do with massive construction projects, and extreme weather, and animal husbandry. There are wombs and begetting—this *is* about creation, after all. This is a powerful God who has created the world and everything in it.

The word used in the Hebrew Bible for the creating that God does is *bara*. In English, you and I can *create*—we can create a piece of artwork or a PowerPoint presentation or a budget. But in Hebrew, there's a special word: Only God can *bara*.

This word is accompanied by an outpouring of other verbs to describe God's acts of creation: God forms the world like a potter with clay, stretches out the heavens, firms up the earth, adorns the world with beauty, speaks a word that brings order out of chaos, brings forth like a mother and father. Says Elizabeth Johnson, "These all point to the life-giving love at the heart of the universe that touches every creature."

All this creation was God's gift to humanity, and our job is to tend it and protect it. The word used in Genesis 2:15 that is often translated as "keep" is the same one Cain angrily

THE TEXT SAYS OVER AND OVER THAT IT IS ALL CREATION, ALL THINGS, EVERYTHING THAT IS BLESSED BY, IN ELIZABETH JOHNSON'S WORDS, THE "NEW LIFE THAT FLOWS TO ALL CREATURES FROM THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST."

uses when God confronts him with Abel's disappearance: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). So as we survey the devastation that surrounds us in the land and waters and air of our planet, our display of innocence might sound like this: "Are we our creation's keeper?"

The answer is yes. That's the actual job description we were given in Genesis 2.

The idea of redeeming creation might be new to some of us. I love creation and I spend a lot of time worrying about how to protect it. But I can't say that I have had passion for *redeeming* creation. I think about people being redeemed—but animals and plants, mountains and seas?

It turns out that the Bible is unmistakable: *All of creation will be redeemed.* Psalm 35 says that God saves humans and animals alike. Paul tells the Romans that "the creation waits with eager longing. . . . We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies."

And consider Colossians 1:15-20: Christ is "the firstborn of all creation." The text says over and over that it is *all creation, all things, everything* that is blessed by, in Elizabeth Johnson's words, the "new life that flows to all creatures from the crucified and risen Christ."

In Isaiah, God the creator is also called the savior and redeemer (Isaiah 43-49). And when the community is restored, it says the rest of creation will rejoice: "the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song; and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12).

There is no better time to claim, or reclaim, our passion for this.

Actually, I *can* think of a better time, but it has already passed. Now scientists tell us there are only a dozen years

before irreversible damage is done. They say that right now at least one million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction. They say that in the year 2050 there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish. It is no wonder, then, that Romans 8 describes the groaning of creation.

We see the oceans rising, storms raging, and fires burning our land. If we can watch the town of *Paradise* burn to the ground and not get the symbolism of this unfolding tragedy, what will it take to claim our attention?

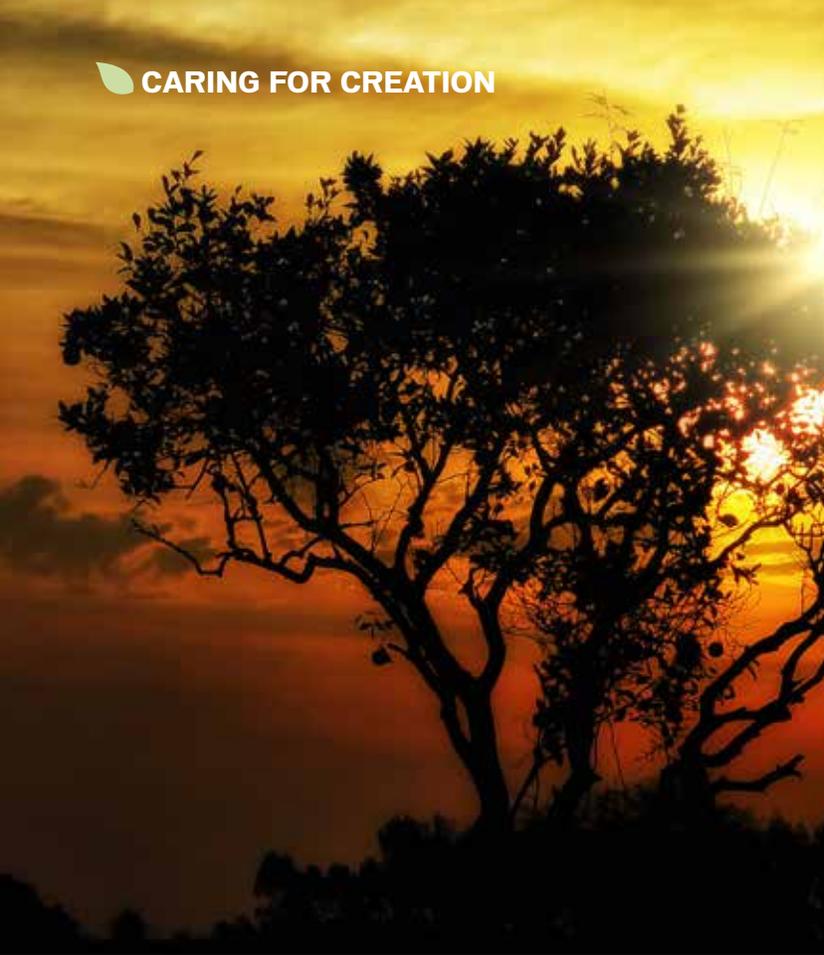
"Paradise," writes California poet Elizabeth Herron, with a sigh. "The irony is not lost on us, or on people in San Francisco where the fire's smoke and ash blanketed the Golden City, and residents . . . wore masks on the street. . . . The unimaginable has now become the expected."

We might be inclined to think about paradise as something we'll receive someday as our reward, as life after death. But we say something different every time we recite the Lord's Prayer. We pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). What do we mean when we say that?

Christianity has forgotten its love for this world, say Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker. In their words: "When Western Christianity removed paradise from today, placing salvation beyond, behind, or ahead of us—but not here and now—it disconnected life from full engagement in the present."

The Romans 8 text is not just about the world to come. It's got past tense, present tense, and future tense. It's about *our* redemption, but also the redemption of all creation. It contains images of both childbirth and adoption.

Perhaps you have read this text often enough that you pass right over the imagery. But as someone who has been adopted *and* who has given birth, I must ponder these images. Why does Paul use two metaphors—and these



Marcelo Cesar Augusto Romero

particular two—to explain salvation?

I should point out that the adoption mentioned here is not exactly like the adoption we think of today. Yes, adoption was a known thing when Paul was writing to the Romans. But it usually involved adult males, not children, and it was all about the father, not the son. Adoption had to do with ensuring legacy and inheritance, glory and honor. The adopting person was an important man who was making sure his name and power lived on. It might be a Roman emperor who wanted to be sure there was a political heir.

So the meaning of adoption here is not that God is adopting little children who need homes and families (though we do know that God cares for the smallest of the small). Rather, Paul is saying that we have the privilege of being God's heirs—and maybe the *responsibilities* of being God's heirs.

And Paul's description of the whole creation groaning in labor? I don't know very many men who would think of using the metaphor of childbirth to describe the creative process. But is there anything more elemental and visceral? Birthing is painful and dangerous—and rewarding and literally life-giving. Every one of us has the breath of life because of this process. If you think this imagery is only for women, you have forgotten where you came from.

Romans 8 is a bit like that view from the airplane. Tom Wright says most readers of Romans hurry on by this passage. But he calls it the view from the top of the hill, the place from which we can see “the whole plan of salvation for all of God's creation.” In his translation of the text, he says it this way:

“creation itself is on tiptoe with expectation, eagerly awaiting the moment when God's children will be revealed.”

According to Romans 8, the plan of salvation is not to rescue us from this world and whisk us to heaven. Rather it's to give birth to a new heaven and a new earth. We don't know exactly what that means, but it would be wise for us to honor the creation that is in labor right now.

Willie Jennings says that it is through Jesus that the God of creation *joined* the creation. “The incarnation itself means God cares very much about the earth,” he says, “not first in terms of possessing it but communing with it.”

How then should we live? First, we can get to work tilling and keeping the garden that God has given us, taking responsibility for every precious creature and plant that has been so lovingly created. How can we not? To do less would be profoundly ungrateful.

And second, we can reclaim hope. In Hebrew, “hope” is the same word as “cord.” So the red cord that Rahab hung from her window indicated the hope that she had in the God she decided to believe in. That cord was her salvation. As Matthew Schlimm describes, hope is a cord connected to something bigger. When we are inclined to despair, remember that we are connected to someone bigger than us.

This past winter was a hard one in the Midwest. The polar vortex was not winter as usual. And then, when spring showed up briefly, it was knocked down by two late snowstorms. When winter finally left, the tall row of burning bush across the back of my yard was just brittle sticks.

But one day I saw something new. Most of the branches were still dead, but there were green leaves emerging at the base of each bush. I didn't see the leaves until June, months late, but the bushes were greening. They were dead, and now they are alive.

When Moses saw a burning bush, a voice said, “Remove the sandals from your feet, because the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).

I like the way that Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker say it: “Everywhere the bushes are on fire, the risen Christ is with us on the road, the Spirit rises in the wind, the rivers of paradise circle the earth, and the fountain of wisdom springs up from the earth we tread, from this holy ground.”

Let us claim, and reclaim, our passion for the redemption of all creation, for the gift of paradise that God has lovingly given to us. The God who both creates and redeems us. 

Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and Communications for the Church of the Brethren, was invited to preach at Annual Conference on the topic “reclaiming passion for the redemption of all creation.”

An ode to the grasses

by Philip A. Orpurt

Let us give praise to the grasses

As they give comfort to our bare feet and tickle us
between the toes after the winter snow and ice.

Bluegrass, Soft Chess,
Smooth Brome,
Meadow Fesque

Let us sing a hymn to the grasses

While lolling on our backs on the lawn, as children,
contemplating the vastness of the universe
and envisioning what lies ahead.

June Grass, Cane,
Quaking Grass, Fluff
Grass, Pampas Grass

Let us give thanks to the grasses

For their shimmering green leaves which sooth
our mental wanderings and daily anxieties.

Brome, Lacegrass,
Downy Chess,
Brookgrass, Velvet

Let us hail the grasses

For their life-giving energy they capture from the
sun in the form of food for mankind and other
forms of life.

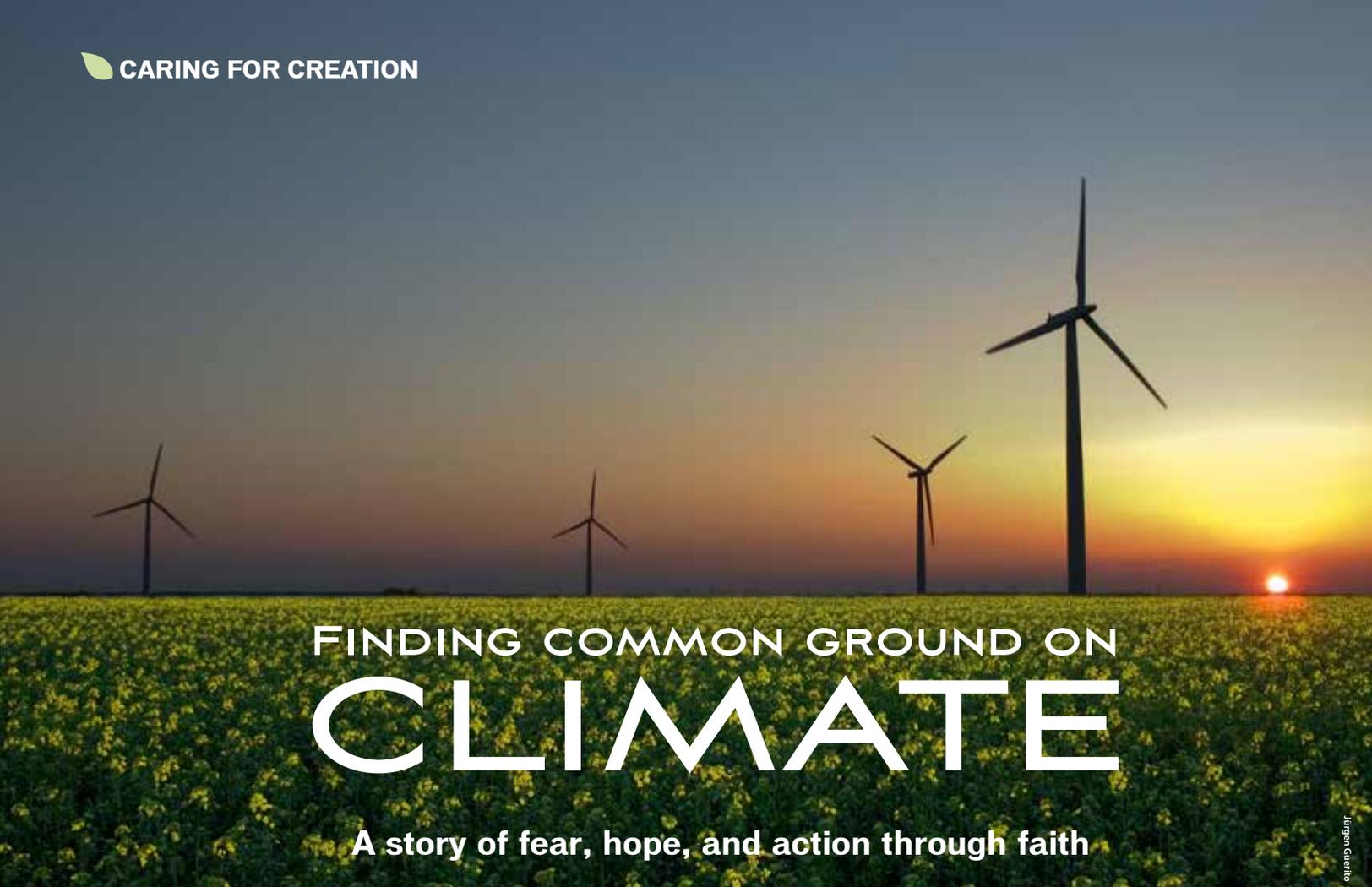
Wheat, Rice, Oats,
Barley, Timothy,
Maize, Rye, Millet

Let us at last rest our bodies and souls beneath the grasses

Grateful for the opportunity we have had to take
part in the ongoing processes of God's creation.

Lovegrass, Manna
Grass, Goldentop,
Nodding, Orchard Grass

Philip A. Orpurt is a retired Manchester College professor. He notes: "My studies and interests in the grasses began back in 1986 as a student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I was involved in finding new fungi associated with the roots of prairie grasses in Wisconsin. The fungi then were tested for the production of new antibiotics useful in medicine. Although no longer involved with that kind of study, I have continued to collect, identify, and preserve grasses as well as emphasize their importance in the history of humankind in my biology and ecology classes."



FINDING COMMON GROUND ON CLIMATE

A story of fear, hope, and action through faith

by Sharon Yohn

I have a confession to make. It is something I don't often share—in fact, I try to hide it even from myself.

My confession is that I am frightened. Terrified. Filled with fear and sorrow that sometimes bleeds into abject hopelessness.

This might come as a surprise to those of you who know me. After all, I have a supportive church community, wonderful husband, amazing daughter, and a great job. Why so much fear?

The fear comes from watching the complete destabilization of our climate. From hearing leaders speak with more and more urgency. And from watching the suffering as floods, fires, and droughts bring life-changing devastation on people—the same people Jesus told us to love as our neighbors.

When I really pay attention to the magnitude and the scale of the problem, I sink into hopelessness and despair. My temptation is to simply not think about it. Climate destabilization is someone else's problem, or too big for me to make a difference, or maybe not that big of a deal anyway.

But I know I am lying to myself, and God knows that too.

As I grew up, I always enjoyed the stories of God calling

people like Moses and Samuel. Their messages seemed direct and clear, and I wanted the same clear calling. That didn't happen, so I muddled through life making the best choices I could. Until the nagging started. The nagging feeling that I needed to be acting on climate destabilization, that I needed to do something, to take some kind of concrete action. Was this God's still small voice?

It was easy to take some household actions to reduce energy use, but that just made the compulsion to act greater. I couldn't listen to scriptures about peacemaking, or serving the poor, or loving your neighbor without thinking of the suffering from climate destabilization. Still, I found excuses enough: I was too busy, I wasn't skilled enough, and I wasn't ready to step so far out of my comfort zone. I am not an extremist or a radical, and I definitely did not want to get involved in activism. But eventually (I'm a little slow sometimes) I realized that maybe this was God's calling for me.

Called or not, I was definitely not prepared. I needed a solution that was not hosed in divisiveness, does justice to the poor, and is consistent with how Jesus taught us to treat each other. Fortunately, I was guided toward the answers I needed and found an organization called Citizens' Climate

Lobby (CCL), a nonpartisan organization determined to build the political will for climate solutions. Here I found a place where people from vastly different neighborhoods and both sides of the aisle actually sit together and work on a solution with an attitude of respect, appreciation, and gratitude.

When I learned about the policy that CCL supports, I was astonished. It was so simple, and yet effective and supported by an overwhelming majority of economists and a surprisingly broad political spectrum. Put a gradually rising price on fossil carbon and distribute that income evenly among all Americans. Here was a market-based policy that can be supported on both sides of the aisle, protect those with lower income, eliminate cumbersome regulations, and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In other words, a solution that was good for America. A solution that is now a bill in the House of Representatives: the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763). Having a positive solution changed my message from despair to hope.

Equally important was learning how to listen. Although I wanted to build support for H.R. 763, I learned that the most important thing I could do was listen and find common ground and common values. This requires honest listening and a desire to understand and respect those who feel differently. I confess that this is sometimes a challenge for me. However, approaching others with love feels like an expression of my faith in God's love.

I'm still no expert at climate advocacy, and often feel sadly lacking. But I also still feel God's call. It was this call that led me to a supportive community and positive action, which led from despair to hope, and from hope to faith that our actions are bringing about progress. There are signs of progress everywhere, from the growth in renewable energy to the more than 50 cosponsors of the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

It is time to accept the realities of how we are dangerously destabilizing the climate, and the very real harm that it is doing to our brothers and sisters in the United States, in Nigeria, and around the world. It is time to treat each other with respect, appreciation, and gratitude; find common values; and move forward on solutions that make us stronger.

Time for action

Whether you have a little or a lot of time, you can take meaningful action. Below are suggestions in order of magnitude of impact.

1. Join a climate advocacy organization.

A problem of this magnitude requires system-level changes, and the fastest way to make that happen is through federal policy changes. This means embracing the American spirit of democracy and telling our legislators that it is time for action on climate change. By joining an organization such as Citizens' Climate Lobby (<https://citizensclimatelobby.org>) or Interfaith Power and Light (www.interfaith-powerandlight.org) our voices are magnified and we receive the support and encouragement of others.

2. Tell Congress it is time to act.

Ask your representatives to support the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763). This policy has bipartisan support, protects low-income families, and is good for the economy. Learn more at energyinnovationact.org and send a letter of support to your representatives at citizensclimatelobby.org/write-your-representative. Not sure about this bill? Then ask them to support action on climate change.

3. Talk about it (and listen).

Ask people about their concerns and share the good news that we can take action without destroying our way of life. Did you know that more than two-thirds of Americans support a carbon tax? You may have more in common with your neighbor than you think.

4. Educate and act in your own congregation.

While policy changes at the federal level are critical, individual and community actions help raise awareness while reducing greenhouse gases. There are lots of suggestions on the Brethren Creation Care website at www.brethren.org/creationcare.

5. Reduce your own negative impact.

Improving energy efficiency is good for everyone. It saves money in the long run and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. For tips, see the Brethren Creation Care website. 

Sharon Yohn is assistant professor of chemistry at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.

I NEEDED A SOLUTION THAT WAS NOT HOUSED IN DIVISIVENESS, DOES JUSTICE TO THE POOR, AND IS CONSISTENT WITH HOW JESUS TAUGHT US TO TREAT EACH OTHER.



HOLY GROUND

AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

by Jeff Boshart

While I was visiting agriculture projects in Nigeria, a sign on the back window of a van owned by Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) caught my eye: "Climate Change is Real, Let's Adapt to Survive." I had to pause and think about how out of place that sticker would be on a church van in the United States.

Here in the US, the debate falls largely along political lines. This disagreement has crept into our churches and our denomination, as is evident at Annual Conference when the topic comes up. Even among those who would agree that there has been a change in our climate, it is difficult to reach agreement over who is to blame and what should be done about it. Should we put our efforts into strategies to adapt to a changing climate or should we keep working to reverse the effects (adaptation versus mitigation)? Some say we must do both and others say it is too late.

In places I have traveled for the Global Food Initiative (GFI), any farmer over a certain age can tell you how rainfall patterns have changed and become less predictable. Crops are planted after a couple of good rains at the onset of the rainy season, but too often the rains simply stop before plants can reach maturity. Sometimes this leads to a reduced yield and other times to total crop failure. Unlike here in the US,

there is no such thing as crop insurance. A failed crop means someone will be hungry or a child cannot go to school.

What can farmers do? While visiting a farmer in Haiti after a hurricane had washed away a hillside of banana plants, snapped off young avocado trees, and stripped leaves from his coffee plants, I asked him what might be done to avoid such complete destruction when the next hurricane hits. He looked at me as if to say, "What a stupid question!" but then resorted to a typical Haitian fatalistic response, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "That's nature."

One of the causes of climate change is increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Through the agricultural practice of plowing, oxygen enters the soil and increases microbial activity, which in turn releases more carbon dioxide. Most of the world's farmland has lost more than half of the carbon that was once stored there as organic matter. Trees perform the function of converting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into roots, stems, and leaves. As they are cut down and burned to make way for more farmland, even more carbon is released into the atmosphere. By plowing the soil and removing trees, farmers are working against their own best interests.

For decades now, tree planting has been promoted in Nigeria to combat the encroachment of the Sahara Desert from the north. In Haiti, soil conservation has been a priority for development organizations since the 1970s at



BRETHREN MAY NOT ALL AGREE ON THE REALITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE OR ITS CAUSES OR EVEN THE SOLUTIONS, BUT WHEN FEEDING PEOPLE IS CALLED FOR, BRETHREN ALWAYS SHOW UP IN A BIG WAY.

least. As important as these efforts have been, clearly more needs to be done.

What if farmers could help themselves and the rest of the planet by adapting their practices to not only survive but to thrive? What if what was good for the environment also allowed people to produce more food? What if God has already given us a powerful technology that is literally right under our feet?

It turns out that adding organic matter to soil through mulches, planting plants called green manures or cover crops, reducing or eliminating soil tillage, and planting trees are all excellent ways to take carbon dioxide out of the air and store it in the soil. These practices benefit people, crops, and the environment. By changing agricultural practices, some scientists calculate that there is a potential to capture half of the world's current yearly output of carbon dioxide. Talk about standing on holy ground!

As you remember from high school biology, plants remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. Carbon then becomes living matter such as leaves, stems, branches, and roots. When a plant dies or leaves fall to the ground, micro-organisms incorporate that material into the soil. If the soil is not plowed and is exposed to sunlight, the carbon will begin to accumulate and build up as organic matter. More organic matter helps soil become more sponge-like, so that rainfall enters the soil instead of taking fertilizer and topsoil into streams and rivers.

For several years, the Global Food Initiative has been promoting soil-building practices with partners in Burundi,

Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Nigeria, and Rwanda. Farming God's Way (FGW) and Foundations for Farming (FFF) are initiatives that have begun in Africa to champion soil conservation and increased crop production. FGW uses a biblically based curriculum, while FFF takes a secular approach. Both programs emphasize mulch-based farming. GFI partners have been exposed to the principles of FGW through trainings or seminars. In Burundi, through the work of Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS), farmers are reporting increased yields of 2 to 10 times what they were getting using traditional practices.

In November 2014, six people representing the Church of the Brethren in Rwanda, Eglises des Freres du Congo (Church of the Brethren in Congo), and THARS traveled to Kenya to receive a one-week intensive course on Farming God's Way with a Christian nonprofit called Care of Creation Kenya. A delegation from EYN traveled to Kenya in 2017. Christian Elliott, GFI volunteer, farmer, and pastor of Knobsville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, joined EYN on this journey. Staff of EYN's agriculture department have experienced excellent results in trials at EYN headquarters in Kwarhi.

Seeds for cover crops or green manures were donated by Richard and Steven Petcher of Petcher Seed Company in Fruitdale, Ala., for use in these countries as well as Honduras and the Dominican Republic (DR). In the DR, GFI volunteer Jason Hoover is trialing various seeds with farmers in the San Juan de la Maguana area. In Haiti, in conjunction with the Haiti Medical Project and Growing Hope Globally (formerly Foods Resource Bank), Haitian staff have organized farmers to build rock walls to retain soil on steep slopes, as well as to prepare tree nurseries to provide coffee, fruit, and lumber trees to farmers once the soil terraces have been implemented.

All these efforts are connected to local churches. Christian farmers are leading the way in their own communities and witnessing to their neighbors through their farms. With each passing year, more food is produced, erosion is reduced, and carbon dioxide is turned into organic matter and stored in the soil.

Brethren may not all agree on the causes or solutions of climate change. But when feeding people is called for, Brethren always show up in a big way. Those who support the GFI are continuing a tradition that is deeply embedded in the Brethren DNA—and maybe much more. 



Jeff Boshart is manager of the Church of the Brethren's Global Food Initiative. Find out more at www.brethren.org/gfi.

The story of Nancy Campbell

by Richard E. Clem



I first heard the name Nancy Campbell while visiting dear friends Earl and Annabelle Roulette. Earl handed me an old daguerreotype in a small case and explained: “This is Nancy Campbell. She was my great grandfather’s house servant.” Earl’s ancestor was William Roulette, whose farm suffered great damage on Sept. 17, 1862, during the Battle of Antietam—the bloodiest day of the Civil War.

Campbell’s name first appears on a Certificate of Freedom recorded in the Washington County Court House in Hagerstown, Md.: “I do hear-by set free my Negro slave, Nancy Campbell, her freedom to commence from the year eighteen hundred and fifty nine.” The document was witnessed and signed by the justice of the peace and Andrew Miller, her former owner—or, as referred to in the South, her “master.”

Andrew B. Miller was born March 24, 1826, in Washington County, Md. At an unknown date, he purchased a 50-acre farm in Tilghmantown, where his wife, Heaster Ann (Smith) Miller, gave birth to at least three children. Tilghmantown is a small town on the Sharpsburg Pike, 8.5 miles south of Hagerstown and about the same dis-

tance from Sharpsburg.

When Andrew’s father, Peter Miller, passed away, his will provided his son with a servant named “Nancy Campbell,” described as: “One Colored Woman, 5 feet 1 ½ inches high, worth \$250.00.” With this appraised value, Miss Nancy was worth as much as a good horse.

Andrew Miller sold his Tilghmantown property in 1859, just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Now with no need for a slave, the retiring farmer decided to grant Campbell her freedom. But without a home or education or a way to support herself, what would happen to the 46-year-old black servant?

Less than one year after being freed, she not only had a new home, but would receive wages for her labor. When Campbell began working for William and Margaret Ann Roulette, they were the parents of five children. Their need for a good, experienced nanny was great. Roulette employed and paid for the services of Campbell and a 15-year-old boy named Robert Simon.

In the late 19th century, William Roulette and his close neighbor, Samuel Mumma, were considered the most prosperous farmers in the Sharpsburg District, raising mostly corn, oats, and barley in their fine limestone soil. And

then the war came to Maryland.

According to *A History of Washington County, Maryland*, the day before the Battle of Antietam William Roulette “took his family six miles north to the Manor Church where they were sheltered by Elder Daniel Wolf, a minister of that church.” The Mummas also evacuated their farm and sought protection at the Manor house of worship.

While living at Tilghmantown, Campbell, a member of the mostly white Manor congregation, probably heard Elder Wolf’s sermons against the evils of slavery. If you owned a slave, you were not allowed to be a member of this church.

Locals called this sanctuary the Manor Dunker Church (or Tunker, in German). Built in 1830, this meeting-house was the mother church of the now-famous Dunker Church on the Antietam battlefield. Services are still held every Sunday in the old limestone structure that now has a large brick addition and is known as Manor Church of the Brethren.

Early on the misty morning of Sept. 17, 1862, Gen. George B. McClellan launched a series of assaults on Gen. Robert E. Lee’s formidable left flank. When these attempts failed to dislodge

Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's veterans from the West Woods, another attack on the Confederate center was made by Gen. William H. French's division. The 5,000 mostly untested Yankees marched blindly toward a Southern line concealed in a sunken farm lane referred to as Hog Trough Road. Directly in the path of the Union advance stood the Roulette farm.

Following the firestorm, one Union soldier remembered, "Around the surgeon's table in the Roulette barn amputated arms and legs were piled several feet deep." Another witness later recalled the damage to the property, "The buildings were struck by shot and shell of which they still bear the marks. One shell pierced the southern end of the dwelling, went up through the parlor ceiling and was found in the attic."

Just south of Roulette's lane, Confederate dead and wounded were stacked in the sunken road, now better known as Bloody Lane. One report stated at least 700 dead were buried on the Roulette farm. Crops were ruined, and the fields were strewn with canteens, blankets, guns, knapsacks, and countless other implements of war.

According to a damage claim filed by Roulette, his house was "stripped during the battle of furnishings and floors were left covered with blood and dirt from being used as a hospital." The fed-

eral government compensated him \$371 toward an estimated claim of \$3,500.

In 1887, William Roulette turned over the farm to his youngest son, Benjamin Franklin Roulette, and the 63-year-old farmer moved into a smaller house in Sharpsburg. By this time, Campbell was getting up in years herself and only able to do "light" work, but Ben Roulette let her stay on at the old homestead.

At an unknown date, she had her picture taken, perhaps by a professional Sharpsburg photographer. The dress she wore in the image appears to be of fine material. The photograph, in a velvet-lined case, is now in the collection of the National Park Service at Antietam, courtesy of Earl Roulette.

Campbell died Jan. 5, 1892, at age 79. Seven years before her death, she recorded a last will and testament with the Register of Wills in the Washington County Court House. It was rare for a former slave to have a will or a significant amount of money.

Combining cash in the bank with "cash in the house," her estate value totaled \$867.04, not including personal property. The will gives testimony to where she placed her trust: "I give and bequeath to the Manor Church of the Tunker denomination to which I belong in Washington County, Maryland, the sum of Fifty Dollars." The Afro-

The 49th annual worship service at the Dunker church at the Antietam battlefield,

Sharpsburg, Md., will be held Sunday, Sept. 15, at 3 p.m., with Carl Hill preaching on "Life in the Midst of Death." The service, sponsored by Mid-Atlantic District of the Church of the Brethren, commemorates the peace witness of the Brethren during the Civil War.

American Methodist Church in Sharpsburg also received \$20 along with her personal Bible.

In addition, Campbell remembered her former master in her will: "I give and bequeath to Andrew Miller, my chest, my trunk and my stand." "And unto Rebecca Roulette, daughter of William Roulette," the document reads, "I give the sum of One Hundred Dollars together with all my personal effects."

A member of the Manor congregation, Nancy was entitled to burial in the church cemetery. Unknown for years, her tombstone remained face down. It was recently discovered and set erect by the cemetery caretaker. At the bottom of the well-worn stone are these words from Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." 

Richard E. Clem is a member of the Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren.



Richard E. Clem



Richard E. Clem

Left: Manor Church of the Brethren, where the Roulette family is believed to have been sheltered during the Battle of Antietam. Nancy Campbell attended services here.

Right: Campbell's gravestone in the cemetery at Manor Church of the Brethren, Boonsboro, Md. Her last name is misspelled "Camel."



Money is the root of evil?

by Tim Harvey

Fall is the time of year when congregations focus on stewardship. Many of us will soon be hearing (or preaching) sermons about money and giving.

Finance committees are preparing pledge cards and the 2020 budget. Fall council meetings are just around the corner.

Because money has a necessary place in our congregations, it seems timely to consider the phrase “Money is the root of evil.” In keeping with the theme of our Bible study series, however, we want to ask, “Does the Bible say this?”

A matter of the heart

The answer is “not quite,” as the common usage of this phrase misquotes 1 Timothy 6:10a: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. . . .” It might seem like a small distinction, but the difference is profound. Money itself is not the issue; our attitude toward money is. As is often the case with matters of Christian discipleship, the fundamental issue is a matter of the heart, and not an external person or thing. A study of the context of the passage helps bear this out.

Paul’s first letter to Timothy is an extended list of instructions to a young pastor in a difficult ministry setting. Timothy is pastor in Ephesus, and he seems to have his hands full. The first five chapters of the letter include instructions on a wide variety of congregational matters: handling false teachers; prayer; the qualifications of bishops, deacons, and pastors; and how people of different ages and life circumstances are to relate to one another. In chapter 6, Paul turns his attention to how certain unnamed leaders have fallen away from the faith, in large part due to their “love of money.”

As this applies to the churches in Ephesus, Paul sees two kinds of teachers. Faithful teachers are those who lead their congregations in the accepted doctrines of the faith. Unfaithful ones teach different doctrines.

Paul has quite a bit to say about unfaithful teachers in verses 4 and 5; reading these verses, one can only imagine the congregational strife that Timothy was forced to deal with. These unfaithful teachers apparently created factions within the congregation over competing doctrines and

BECAUSE WE MATTER TO ONE ANOTHER, THE ABUNDANCE OF ONE MEMBER CAN BE WILLINGLY SHARED WITH ANOTHER WHO EXPERIENCES SCARCITY. BRETHREN RECOGNIZE THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS DEMONSTRATED AS WE HELP ONE ANOTHER HAVE ENOUGH TO LIVE.

interpretations of Scripture (“disputes about words,” v. 4). Once factions existed, relationships within the congregation inevitably became strained.

But Paul believes he understands the motivations that have led these teachers astray: they have come to believe that “godliness is a means of gain” (v. 5). Their motivations are not to help people grow in Christlikeness, or to see church members support one another through the difficulties of being a Christian in a non-Christian world. Instead, their motivation in the gospel has been to get rich. Their love of money has caused them to “fall into temptation” where they found “ruin and destruction” (v. 9). Simply put, these false teachers have “wandered away from the faith” (v. 10).

We should not, however, overlook that there is “gain” to be found in the gospel. The gain is not measured in wealth or possessions. It is found when our desires become aligned with God’s desires and when we learn to be content with what we have.

Brethren recognize the significance of this kind of gain; our own tagline reads, in part, “Continuing the work of Jesus. Simply.” Brethren affirm that the accumulation of wealth and possessions can become a spiritual idol.

Interestingly, this idol is not necessarily defined by how much wealth or how many possessions we have. Any amount of wealth and possessions can become an idol. The spiritual issue has to do with the ways our hearts are shaped by our wealth and possessions.

How can we tell?

I spent two weeks studying this topic with a Sunday school class in my congregation. We had an excellent study that included great interaction and reflection on both the misquoted phrase and the scripture text, right up to the point when we began applying the text to our lives. That’s when we began to struggle. We weren’t sure what

“wandering away from the faith” because of the “love of money” actually looked like. How can we tell?

Our class recognized that some moral and spiritual failures are easy to see and ought to be addressed by the pastor or other church members. If we knew, for instance, that a member was having an extramarital affair, or we witnessed a Facebook argument between members of the congregation, or heard a member use racist or sexist terms in speech, we would feel it appropriate to confront our sister or brother about this.

But financial matters seem different; somehow money is a private matter. Only a few members of the finance commission ever see the pledge cards, and most congregations expressly forbid this information from being shared with the pastor, even though generosity is an important spiritual discipline.

So how do we know if a sister’s or brother’s heart is shaped more by their finances than their faith? As we consider our own personal giving, one place we might start is by considering the financial needs of the members in our congregation. Brethren mutual aid recognizes that the love we have for one another includes sharing money and possessions when there is need. Because we matter to one another, the abundance of one member can be willingly shared with another who experiences scarcity. Brethren recognize that the kingdom of God is demonstrated as we help one another have enough to live.

A second area to consider would be the examination of our own living standard. In his book *The Naked Anabaptist*, Stuart Murray writes that “the Anabaptist tradition might ask whether lower living standards and reduced security could be at least as conducive to genuine spiritual growth as listening to sermons, participating in worship services, or visiting retreat centers” (p. 124). This is a point Paul makes in 1 Timothy 6:8: “but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.” Might we find spiritual renewal as we give away our wealth and invest ourselves in others?

Perhaps more than anything else, our attitude toward money reveals how much we really trust God. Based on our own study of this phrase, my congregation will be taking a deeper look about how giving related to a church budget offers helpful commentary on our individual spiritual lives. Might we be giving anything away this fall? Might you? 

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

For further reading

The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith, by Stuart Murray (Herald Press). A challenging and helpful analysis of core Anabaptist beliefs, including how mutual aid helps us pursue justice, peace, and deeper relationships with Christ and the church. Available from Brethren Press.

How the Body of Christ Talks

I have a friend whose primary language is Spanish. I try to greet him in Spanish, but our conversation stops when we get past the most basic of words. Not long ago, we stumbled our way in broken English and Spanish through a conversation that covered family and health. It was a striking moment of connection. Yet, it was clear to me that knowing a few words in Spanish does not mean we can communicate. Learning to talk and learning to have a conversation are two very different things.

This is equally true of our communities and churches. It seems as though everyone has to say something about everything, but we understand less and less. Everyone is speaking, and no one is listening. We talk, but we aren't always having a conversation.

C. Christopher Smith, founding editor of the *Englewood Review of Books* and co-author of *Slow Church*, has written a key book on conversation as a corporate spiritual practice. *How the Body of Christ Talks* invites the church into deeper modes of speaking and listening. While the wider culture seems to have little space for meaningful conversations, Smith calls on the church to cultivate spaces of deep talking and listening.



JOSHUA BROCKWAY

How the Body of Christ Talks has emerged from decades of work at Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis. Smith recounts how their Sunday evening service was coming to an end but the community did not want to give up coming together. They began meeting to talk about their faith. “Our early conversations,” Smith writes, “were a hot mess.” Over time, however, they found that they were

“coming to know and trust one another, and, in the process, were maturing in their capacity for conversation” (p. 2).

Smith starts with two assumptions. First, he is clear that we are more than just individuals. We are people formed in interconnecting communities, and those communities have specific vocabularies and grammars that shape how we interact with others. Even more fundamental, we are each part of family systems, and those family systems have different ways of talking.

Second, Smith is clear that this social connection is not just our experience, but it is the nature of God. Classical understandings of the Trinity have described the three persons as “mutually indwelling.” Smith describes this perfectly, saying that “the persons of the Trinity are fully attentive to one another, speaking and responding out of this complete attentiveness” (p. 13). Even in this mutual attentiveness, the giving and receiving of Creator, Word, and Holy Spirit is done freely, without coercion. The inner life of God is a conversation of love.

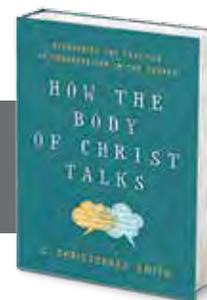
From these two assumptions Smith outlines the scriptural and theological basis for transformative conversations, weaving in practical insights for such conversations and the topics we can talk about. He brings together a wide range of authors and personal experiences to highlight how talking together about meaningful things as the body of Christ is a spiritual discipline.

Smith does not assume that there is an ideal church in which these ideal practices take place. He is clear that life together is messy. There are fits and starts, conflicts, and complicating factors as people try to follow Jesus together. Smith’s vision of conversation within the discipleship of the congregation is one for the long haul. It means showing up over and over. Conversation is a lifetime of listening and speaking.

For Brethren, Smith’s experiences with transformative conversations sound familiar. Ever since Annual Conference delegates began meeting around tables, it has been clear that a different kind of conversation is taking place during business. In fact, this year nondelegates wanted the opportunity to talk together as well. These table conversations are not perfect, but sitting face to face has changed how we relate to each other as fellow disciples of Jesus.

Meeting together to pray, talk, discern, and read the Scriptures was the foundational practice for 18th century Pietists. It was the birthplace of the Brethren. Imagine if every congregation met together not just to decide big issues but to talk together about their faith. Imagine what it would mean today for our faith, our congregations, and our denomination. 

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



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *How the Body of Christ Talks*. Author: C. Christopher Smith. Publisher: Brazos Press, 2019. Available from Brethren Press.

Standing Committee revises appeal process

The Standing Committee of district delegates revised the appeal process during pre-Conference meetings in Greensboro, N.C. It also approved a two-thirds majority vote requirement as part of a new *Standing Committee Manual*, among other business. An attempt to continue discussions that have taken up much time in recent years—about Michigan District and On Earth Peace—failed when the committee voted against adding them to the agenda.

The revised appeal process was proposed by a three-member committee: Loren Rhodes of Middle Pennsylvania District, Susan Chapman Starkey of Virilina District, and John Willoughby of Michigan District, who worked closely with the Conference officers. The document combined two existing documents on appeals with revisions to the process. Willoughby explained that the group attempted to consider how Standing Committee might work beyond the scope of the existing process.

Significant changes included a call to exhaust other options before initiating an appeal, addition of a section on conflict of interest and recusal, clarification of the time frame for initiating an appeal, and limiting Standing Committee to one appeal each year unless required by polity. A change that garnered questions and conversation was insertion of the word “fair” as a consideration in an appeal, in addition to polity considerations. The section as approved reads: “Issues on appeal shall be limited to questions of whether the process and reasoning by which the district or denominational entity made this decision were fair and consistent with Annual Conference polity.”

Another year was granted to work on other aspects of the judicial role of Standing Committee.

A new *Standing Committee Manual* compiling existing policies, procedures, and guidelines into one document was used for the first time. A revision that “any recommendations from Standing Committee to the full delegate body will require a two-thirds majority vote of Standing Committee” was made. An amendment added language to the effect that should a two-thirds majority not be reached options for moving forward



Susan Chapman Starkey, John Willoughby, and Loren Rhodes propose revisions to the Standing Committee appeal process.

would include appointing a task team to work on refinements to achieve a two-thirds majority, recommending deferring to a future Conference, or suspending the two-thirds requirement to permit forwarding an item of business to the full delegate body by a simple majority.

Two district boundary changes were affirmed. Pacific Southwest District incorporated the state of Nevada into its geographic boundaries. Virilina District has negotiated with the districts of West Marva and Southern Ohio/Kentucky to rear-range boundaries.

Elected to the **Nominating Committee** were Michaela Alphonse of Atlantic Southeast District, Kurt Borgmann of South Central Indiana District, Becky Maurer of Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, and Dennis Webb of Illinois and Wisconsin District.

Elected to the **Appeals Committee** were Stafford Frederick of Virilina District, Kim Ream of Atlantic Northeast District, John Willoughby of Michigan District, Timothy Vaughn of Western Pennsylvania District as first alternate, Phil Miller of Missouri and Arkansas District as second alternate.

Named to the **Program Feasibility Study Committee** was Janet Elsea of Shenandoah District.



Children's Disaster Services has announced fall training workshops

Go to www.brethren.org/cds for more information and to register.

Sept. 20-21 in Fort Lupton, Colo., at Fourway Baptist Church

Sept. 20-21 in Roanoke, Va., at Oak Grove Church of the Brethren

Oct. 11-12 in Tampa, Fla., at Hyde Park Presbyterian Church

Oct. 11-12 in Portland, Ore., at Fruit and Flower

Oct. 18-19 in Omaha, Neb., at Omaha Rapid Response



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Mission and Ministry Board approves budget parameter

A budget parameter for core ministries of the Church of the Brethren in 2020 was on the agenda of the Mission and Ministry Board in pre-Conference meetings. This was the final board meeting presided by chair Connie Burk Davis, who has concluded her term.

The board approved a parameter of \$4,969,000 for the core ministries next year. Treasurer Brian Bultman and assistant treasurer Ed Woolf reported that the parameter reflects work to create a balanced budget. It also reflects a \$220,000 expense reduction. Finance staff said that while reductions are not yet finalized they could include removal of campaign expenses, restructuring, and employees making personal changes in their health insurance coverage. More details will be presented in October. The parameter includes the use of \$121,000 in designated funds.

Additional financial projections for next year include expectation that a decades-long slide in congregational giving will continue, a one-percent increase in salary and benefits, a four-percent increase in medical insurance cost, and a planned decrease in the “draw” from the Brethren Service Center quasi-endowment.

In other business

The board approved \$325,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to continue the **Nigeria Crisis Response** through 2019 and into March 2020. A budget of \$275,000 is planned for 2020 and a budget of \$135,000 for 2021.

Three congregations were welcomed into the **Open Roof Fellowship**: Center Church of the Brethren in Northern Ohio



President Joel S. Billi of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) addresses the Mission and Ministry Board in pre-Conference meetings. At left is Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer.

District, Polo Church of the Brethren in Illinois and Wisconsin District, and J.H. Moore Memorial Church of the Brethren (Sebring Church of the Brethren) in Atlantic Southeast District.

The annual **Rev. 7:9 recognition** from the Intercultural Ministry was awarded to René Calderón. Originally from Ecuador, he was a member of the denominational staff in former decades and worked on intercultural ministries including support for sanctuary churches and translation of resources into Spanish, among other efforts. He worked in Puerto Rico for a time, and served as a co-pastor with his wife, Karen. The award was given in absentia.

Named to continue the Annual Conference assignment **“Living Together as Christ Calls”** were Thomas Dowdy, John Hoffman, and Carol Yeazell.

Named to a new **Strategic Design Team** were Carl Fike, Lois Grove, Paul Schrock, and Colin Scott.

Recognized for completing their terms of service were board chair Connie Burk Davis, Mark Bausman, Luci Landes, and Susan Liller.

Named to the **executive committee for 2019-2020** were Lois Grove, Paul Liepelt, and Colin Scott, joining the new chair, Patrick Starkey, and chair-elect, Carl Fike.

Personnel notes

Brian Bultman resigned as chief financial officer and executive director of organizational resources for the Church of the Brethren as of Aug. 2, to become vice president of finance and CFO at Central Credit Union of Illinois. He was CFO of the denomination since Feb. 9, 2015. He oversaw the finance office, made regular financial reporting to the board, held responsibility for annual financial and audit reports, oversaw sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.; and made initial preparation for the sale of excess vacant land at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Gabriela Carillo Chacón began as admissions recruiter at Bethany Seminary on June 26. She is a 2019 graduate of Earlham College.

Kendra Harbeck has resigned as manager of the office of Global Mission and Service effective Aug. 31, to pursue a graduate degree in teaching students with visual impairments. She worked in the position for six years, since Sept. 1, 2013. She produced the Global Mission email prayer guide, helped host international guests, provided logistics for visits of Brethren to international venues, helped organize Mission Alive, related with staff working internationally,

maintained communication with international church leaders, and more.

Dylan Higgs began July 8 as director of instructional design at Bethany Seminary. Higgs will support faculty and students in the use of technology.

Hannah Shultz began Aug. 5 in a staff position as coordinator of short-term service for Brethren Volunteer Service. Earlier, she was volunteer assistant workcamp coordinator for the 2015 season.

Nikifor Sosna has begun as BVS orientation assistant, serving as a second-year volunteer. His first year of BVS was with Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Our farm gathered heifers

I read with great interest the role of Lucy West and her support of Dan West, the role of a wife that is so often not acknowledged but critical in making the visionary's goals possible. I recalled the role that my parents, Roger and Olive Roop, also played in making West's vision a reality.

When they heard of this vision, they agreed to offer their farm in Union Bridge, Md., as the gathering place for the heifers. After many conversations with M. R. Zigler and with a handshake, the deal was made. Soon heifers began to arrive via a variety of modes of transportation. A local truck driver, Vernon Gladhill, not a member of the Church of the Brethren, offered his services to haul cattle. The local veterinarian, Dr. Zinkham, also not a member of the church, offered his services. Olive served meals anytime of the day or night to the drivers when heifers arrived. Rouford Coonts, Wayne Keltner, and Kenny West were conscientious objectors who gave assistance in the care of these heifers (Kenny being a cousin of Dan West).

Giving inoculations and keeping records on each heifer became a bookkeeping nightmare. From 1944-1948, 3,600 head of heifers moved through our farm awaiting shipment. Dr. Omar, a state veterinarian, came to the farm to inspect and make sure all necessary inoculations had been given. Cowboys reported that heifers with horns were a hazard on the boat. This necessitated building a chute where each heifer was dehorned.

When the heifers were on our farm, there were two stampedes. Roger lived to tell the tale, as he was in the midst of a stampede when it occurred. It was suspected that someone in the community caused this because signs to our farm fre-

CLASSIFIEDS

We at Brethren Press would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us out at Annual Conference. To all of you who helped, from unloading the books to helping customers, to tearing it all down at the end, we are grateful for and humbled by your generosity. Thanks to each and every one of the Brethren Press bookstore volunteers.

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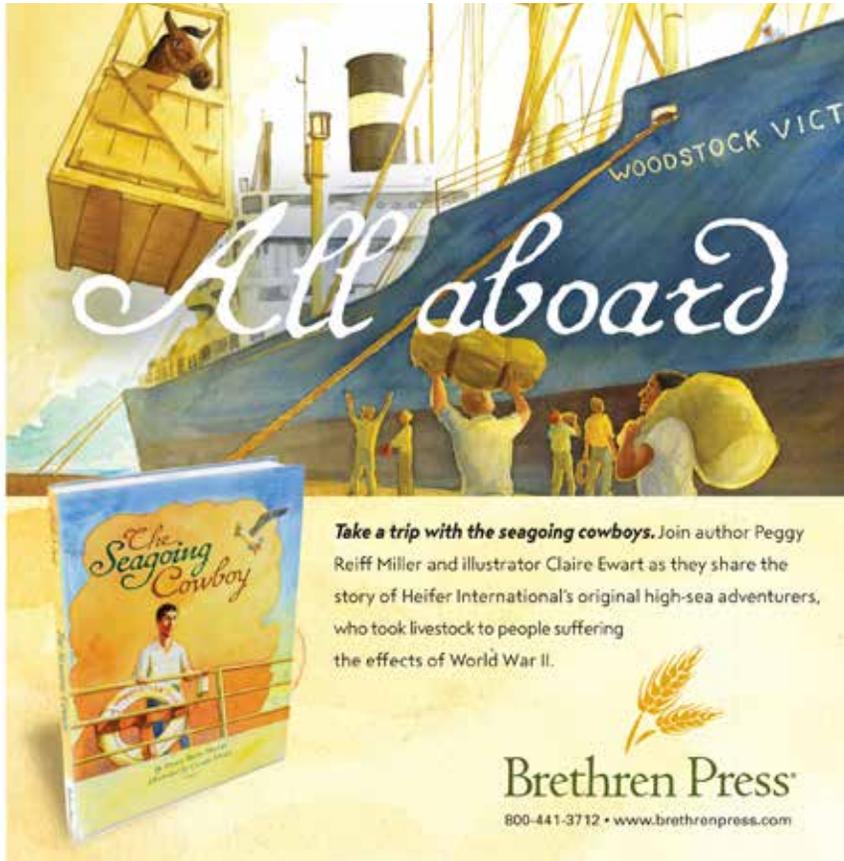
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All aboard

Take a trip with the seagoing cowboys. Join author Peggy Reiff Miller and illustrator Claire Ewart as they share the story of Heifer International's original high-sea adventurers, who took livestock to people suffering the effects of World War II.

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quently were destroyed. At school I was told by fellow students that my parents were Communists.

In 1948, Roger contracted undulant fever from the cattle, which required hospitalization and a long recovery period. This brought an end to our farm being the gathering place for the heifers. I do not know where they were gathered after 1948. I just know that this endeavor by my parents made me aware that my neighbors are around the world and not just those who live next door or who go to the same church.

Patricia Roop Hollinger
Westminster, Md.

Fond memories

The July/August Messenger brought back many fond memories. At the time when Dan West was beginning his mission leading to Heifer Project, I was a teenager and we were avidly following his work in our youth group in the

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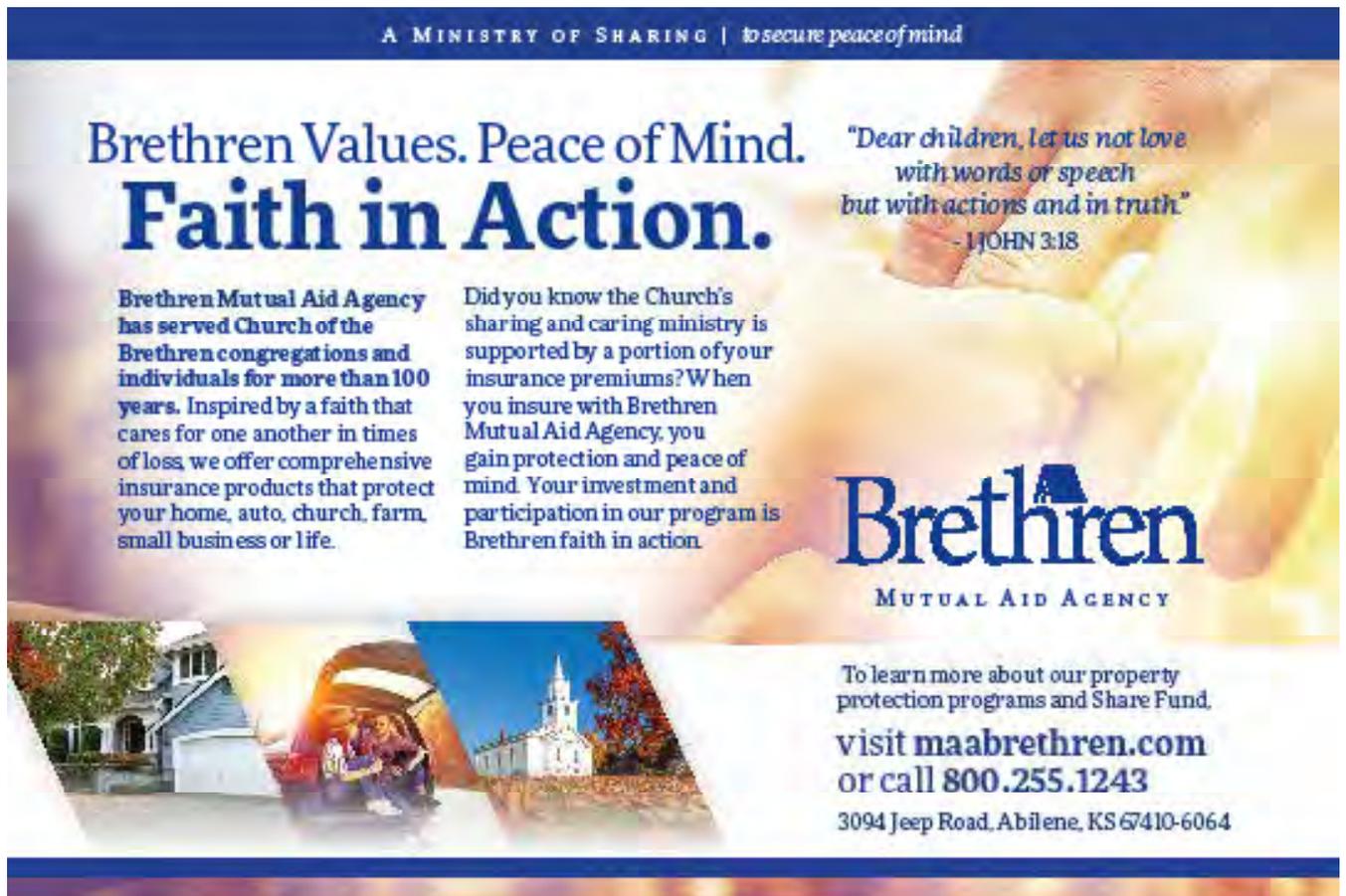
*"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
- 1JOHN 3:18*

Brethren
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Hagerstown, Md., church.

Peggy Reiff Miller's article referencing Paul Keller reminded me of my time in 1946-1947 when I worked as his secretary in the Brethren Service office at the Church of the Brethren headquarters on State Street in Elgin, Ill. I believe he was serving his alternative service as a conscientious objector at the time. One of our projects was a brochure (it may have been the very first one) on the budding Heifer Project.

The seagoing cowboys project was an exciting event for all—my brother, Aubrey (Ed) Varner, and a friend, Ralph Spicer, both were among those who made a trip.

Mary (Varner) Rosborough
Boonsboro, Md.

How was Conference?

"How was Conference for you?" That is such a tricky question. I came away feeling hopeful for the future of Church of the Brethren in part because of the provocative questions the compelling vision team guided us through, and because of the hard work our table did to carefully and thoughtfully and prayerfully answer each question. Our table was theologically diverse. On Saturday afternoon, both conservatives and progressives of the table wanted a group picture. In my mind, hope seemed like it was a seed in fertile soil.

Now, several weeks removed, I am sad-

dened to say my hope is waning. A friend showed me the latest *BRF Witness* titled "The Lie of 'Progressive Christianity.'" Even though this issue wasn't written by Brethren Revival Fellowship authors, the point is heard loud and clear. Having had positive relationships with members of the BRF and appreciating BRF's deep love for the church, I wonder if all members of BRF agree with this divisive issue of *BRF Witness*.

If the Church of the Brethren is to survive, we have to love and care for each other—not hate and discount one another. My question is, "Where is God in all this?"

Todd Reish
Greenville, Ohio

TURNINGPOINTS

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

Centenarians

Brandt, Sarah, 100, Annville, Pa., June 7
Painter, Marion, 101, West Chester, Pa., Sept. 6

Deaths

Anderson, Catherine I. Wolfe, 90, Hampstead, Md., Feb. 7
Anspach, Wayne Howard (Snack), 89, Palmyra, Pa., May 26
Anstine, Mable Elizabeth Culler, 89, Hartville, Ohio, March 15
Applegate, James Lynn, 72, Norton, Kan., May 28
Atkins, Pierce A., 90, Elkhart, Ind., April 24
Aushman, Thomas R., 78, York, Pa., March 30
Bailey, Marvin E. (Dick), 85, York, Pa., Jan. 31
Balsbaugh, Faye G. Bricker, 91, Myerstown, Pa., May 10
Bender, Hannah Christine Hildebrand, 98, White Rock, S.C., May 22
Berkey, Kathryn E. Arbaugh, 87, Denton, Md., May 15

Brandt, Samuel H., 90, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 26
Brandt, Sarah B. Theal, 100, Annville, Pa., June 30
Breedon, Robert E., 80, York, Pa., April 6
Brown, Clair Edward, 85, York, Pa., April 9
Bryson, Joseph K., 97, Lancaster, Pa., May 28
Bucher, Wilbur W., 93, Lancaster, Pa., May 23
Caster, Vivian Maxine, 95, Apple Creek, Ohio, June 29
Clark, Esther Petersime, 82, Greenville, Ohio, Nov. 20
Collins, Donald C., 88, Lewistown, Pa., June 3
Croy, Merl Devon, 93, Wakarusa, Ind., March 23
Douville, Thomas J., 28, Hummelstown, Pa., May 17
Dubree, Marchall, 77, Sebring, Fla., Aug. 4, 2018
Espenship, Robert, 74, Oaks, Pa., May 16
Ferguson, Thomas L., 79, Smithsburg, Md., June 8
Fisher, Charles, 77, Flat Rock, Ill., Dec. 7
Fisher, Robert (Dean), 76, Flat Rock, Ill., Dec. 4
Fox, Margaret M. Cockerham, 87, Royersford, Pa., April 20
Frantz, Reta Jane Grady, 96, Bethel, Pa., March 1
Garnes, Edward M., 63, Mercersburg, Pa., May 25
Gingrich, Althea Shellenberger, 94, Mechanicsburg, Pa., June 18
Godfrey, Florence V. (Wheat), 89, Dallastown,

Pa., Sept. 16, 2018
Goodling, Joanne E. Lehman, 75, New Oxford, Pa., May 23
Groff, Warren F., 94, Bartlett, Ill., June 23
Hahn, Anna R. Ecenroad, 88, Akron, Pa., May 17
Hornbaker, Franklin Dean, 69, Garden City, Kan., April 27
Jacoby, Roberta L., 82, Johnstown, Pa., June 27
Jurell, Judith Marie Jefferies, 64, Palmyra, Pa., March 3
Kautz, Lois P., 93, Middletown, Pa., June 1
Kesselring, Andrew P., 45, Sebring, Fla., Dec. 21
Koons, Ethel M. Filbrun, 95, Phoenix, Ariz., May 26
Kulp, Carol, Palmyra, Pa., May 9
Kurtz, Hazel Lucille Horst, 99, Verona, Wis., April 5
Landis, Emily Jane, 88, Somerset, Pa., May 3
Lehman, Jeffrey L., 64, Dallastown, Pa., June 5
Mack, Gracie, 86, Sebring, Fla., Nov. 13
Matthews, Evelyn Irene Lam Cline, 86, Bridgewater, Va., May 24
Metcalf, Joan (Josie) Rinehart, 82, Westminster, Md., March 1
Michel, Helen Anna Schwaiger, 90, Garden City, Kan., May 15
Miller, Esther I. Sullivan, 88, Thomasville, Pa., May 31
Mott, Ronald E., 98, Garden

City, Kan., April 30
Nusbaum, Frances Olivia (Susie) Bradshaw, 84, Frederick, Md., Jan. 30
Ocker, Lista M., 85, Chambersburg, Pa., May 20
Olwine, Helen Rhoades, 101, Troy, Ohio, Dec. 9
Ott, Kim Leo, 62, Troy, Ohio, April 21
Palmer, Donald, Jr., 71, Hartville, Ohio, May 16
Printz, Betty Jane Smith, 87, Hagerstown, Md., April 18
Raver, Louise M. Krout, 92, Dallastown, Pa., Dec. 14
Rhine, Robert F., 80, Lebanon, Pa., June 23
Richards-Racop, Marilyn Joan Robison, 86, Vincennes, Ind., March 17
Roberts, Linda Lou, 76, Topeka, Kan., April 29
Schaudel, Otto, 81, Lititz, Pa., May 16
Seaman, Lois Jean Etter, 78, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 23
Shepard, Margaret Ann Hovey, 98, Sebring, Fla., April 30
Shively, Ila Louise Flora, 91, Bakersfield, Calif., May 10
Shober, Florence Brengle, 96, Boonsboro, Md., June 14
Smith, Harry M., 87, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 7
Smith, Louise Ellen Hutzell, 94, Walkersville, Md., June 12
Smith, Nancy Lou Miller, 78, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 15
Smith, Pauline E. (Dot) Sell, 89, Duncansville, Pa.,

May 27
Smith, Shirley Marie Shepley, 82, Frederick, Md., Dec. 15
Stern, Phillis Ruth, 85, Goshen, Ind., May 9
Stockman, Wanda, 79, Feagaville, Md., June 9
Thomas, Harold Edward, Jr., 73, Sykesville, Md., May 11
Tyler, Olive Faye Hart, 96, Troy, Ohio, April 8
Wallace, Leila Joan, 89, Ankeny, Iowa, June 12
Wheeler, Mary Louise Bolton, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., June 26
Whitacre, Anna Belle Mae Bittinger, 91, McPherson, Kan., April 17
Wine, Lois Marie Frantz, 91, Lenexa, Kan., June 7
Yunginger, Ronald E., 82, Lancaster, Pa., June 13
Zellers, Arthur R., 68, Palmyra, Pa., May 16
Zimmerman, Beulah Stilley, 98, Winston-Salem, N.C., March 1

Ordained

Davidson Smith, Joanna, W. Plains Dist. (McPherson, Kan.), June 9
Dye, James, W. Marva Dist. (Brake, Petersburg, W.Va.), May 19
Glenny, Jeffrey, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Spring Mount, Warriors Mark, Pa.), June 16
Stone, Laura, S/C Ind. Dist. (Manchester, North Manchester, Ind.), May 5

No time for denial

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

I had been in denial. Then, this spring, United Nations-sponsored reports on the environment smashed my Pollyannaish notion that “reduce, reuse, recycle” is enough.

Some of the hard facts that keep me up at night:

- Global temperatures are likely to reach the no-return point before I reach retirement age. It will hit hard during my lifetime—but what I am heartsick about is that this has been foisted on my son, who just turned 17, and his generation.

- The polar ice and glaciers are melting even faster than expected. The rise in sea levels will be commensurate, and so will the changes of climate.

- Millions of species will go extinct very soon, in addition to the many that already have. I will grieve the loss of giraffes, but I’m more worried about the bees and the loss of pollinators essential to our food supply.

- A radical increase in migration is expected. Some are making the connection between the refugee crisis and the environmental destruction that interferes with the ability to farm and earn a livelihood.

- Hoarding of resources by the rich, at the expense of the poor, is not a new problem, but now there are direct connections with the environment. Some economists are seeking alternate monetary and economic systems to prioritize sustainable livelihoods and deal with the increasing national debt of poor countries, where natural resources are being plundered to pay it off.

We are in a wide-ranging, multi-faceted emergency, the kind that requires an immediate system-wide, global change of course—what some have likened to the national mobilizations in the US and England during World War II.

Though our denomination is small, we do have the ability to make a difference. We have some useful tools in our Brethren “toolbelt”: *Simple living*—an antidote to the economic system that puts a dollar sign on everything, and a counter to the consumer culture that underlies so much environmental degradation. *Peace witness*—prescient in its critique of war and the military, the former a major contributor to environmental destruction, the latter one of the world’s largest polluters. *Focus on community*—placing dis-

cernment and decision-making collectively in the hands of people who are living in Christ-centered relationship.

Service—the quintessential Brethren response to disaster.

After experiencing love feast at Annual Conference, it occurs to me that the four movements of love feast are helpful too:

Examination: Love feast starts with truth-telling—now usually inward and spiritual, but in past centuries often outward and public. Now, in the face of an environmental emergency, can we research the crisis and possible solutions, examine our lifestyles, confess sins that have contributed, pray for repentance of destructive ways, and fervently seek God’s salvation and resurrection power for the whole of the world?

Feetwashing: In this crisis we need to serve God’s creation with humility, which means giving up our human-centeredness. What could this look like? One assessment of the crisis says the solution is to keep at least 50 percent of land in a natural state, so every acre is precious. Perhaps we give up our aesthetic of manicured lawns, stop spraying chemicals on our properties, and create pollinator gardens or plant trees instead.

The meal: Sitting at table together builds relationships. Many educators are recommending that people—especially children and youth—relearn a relationship with nature. Spiritual leaders over the centuries have found that a close relationship with nature leads to a closer relationship with God.

Communion: When we share the bread and cup, we are one body in Christ and we indicate our willingness to take up the cross and bear that burden together. Our communion must now extend beyond humanity to the whole earth. How can we help carry the suffering of creation?

My favorite part of love feast happens after it is over. This is the part where Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn and went out into the night.

A dark night looms, by all accounts, and we are all walking into it. But I believe God has placed us here and now “for such a time as this,” to borrow words from Esther.

We go out with the hymn of Christ on our lips, to do what we can, where we can. Starting now. 

WHEN WE SHARE THE BREAD AND CUP, WE ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST AND WE INDICATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO TAKE UP THE CROSS AND BEAR THAT BURDEN TOGETHER. OUR COMMUNION MUST NOW **EXTEND BEYOND HUMANITY TO THE WHOLE EARTH.**

Your gifts do great things!

A planned gift to the Church of the Brethren helps sustain our missions and ministries into the future.

One planned giving strategy to consider is a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)**. It is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian to a qualified charity.



Photo by Coombes

In addition to supporting a charity, a QCD is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA because it excludes the amount donated from taxable income and can reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare. QCDs can also be counted toward your Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) for the year if:

- Your age is 70 ½ or older,
- the amount of the QCD does not exceed what would be taxed as ordinary income, which excludes non-deductible contributions,
- the sum of all annual QCDs does not exceed \$100,000, AND
- the RMD deadline for the current year is met (generally December 31).

If a Qualified Charitable Distribution sounds like a favorable move for you, we invite you to prayerfully consider the Church of the Brethren as one of your charitable organizations of choice.



Church of the Brethren

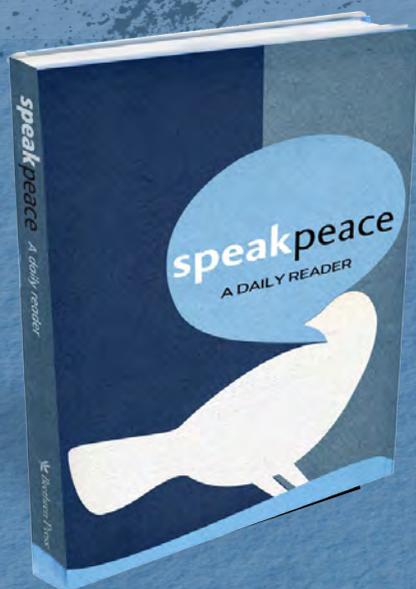
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In a time of conflicting voices...

**Speak
peace**



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