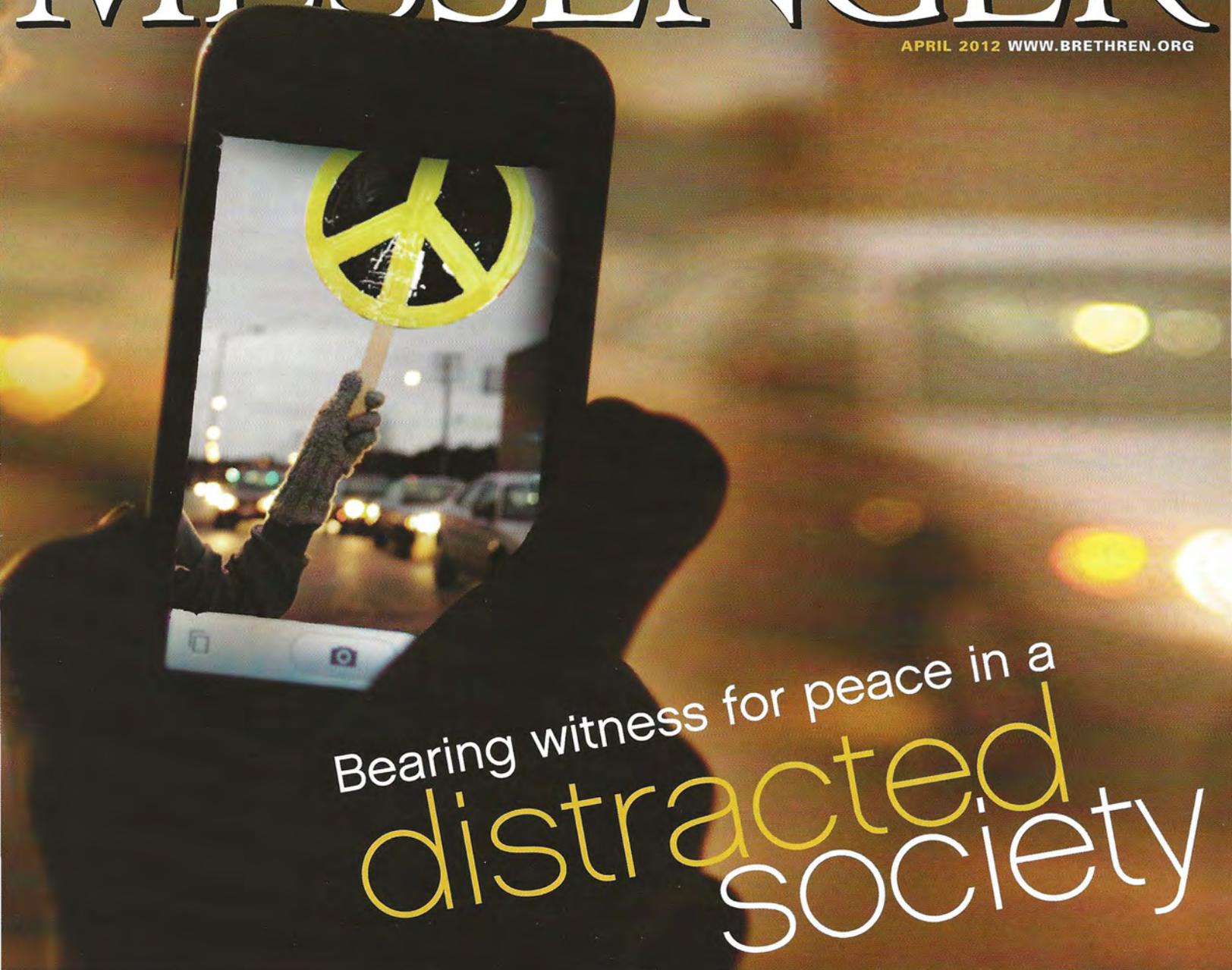


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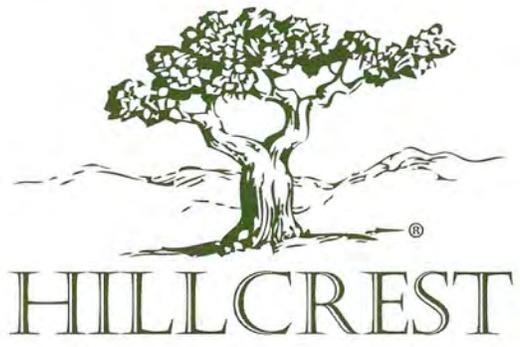
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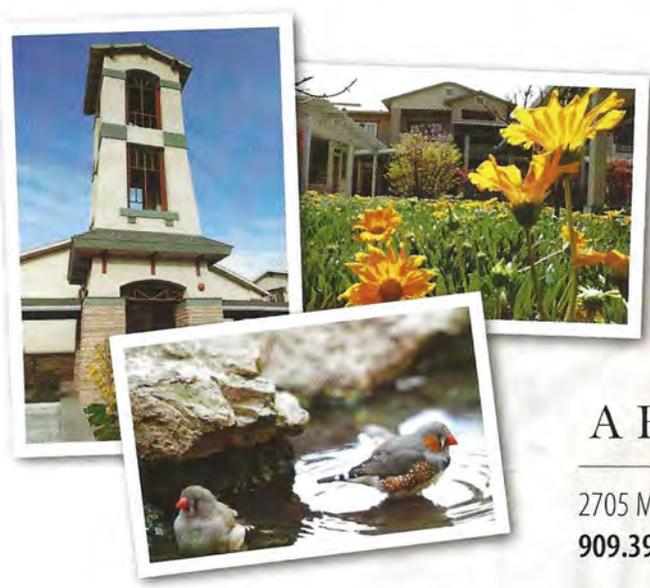
Bearing witness for peace in a
distracted
society

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{ Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }

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Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER “Where have all the flowers gone? Turned to iPhones, every one. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?” Those over 50 might recall the allusion to that ‘60s anti-war folk song. But today, students—and many others from generations X, Y, and Who Cares?—are likely listening to a different tune, and chances are they’re listening to it over their smart phones, if they’re even listening at all. Technology today brings us information about events almost before they occur. But in spite of—or perhaps, to some extent, because of—our modern technology, has our collective conscience begun to tune out the real-life pain of the world?

8 Bearing witness for peace in a distracted society

Are we so distracted these days that we have become numb to the ills of society, the ills of the world? Mike McKeever, professor of biblical studies at Judson University, began to wonder this a few years ago as he observed his students. “I was struck by the fact that a student could be in college during a time of war and scarcely be aware of the fact.” Maybe we need to pay closer attention.

12 A different shade of chivalry

Conscientious objectors: aren’t they a thing of the past—along with draft resisters, peace marches, and love beads? One might think so, until they met Corey Gray. As it turns out, spiritual enlightenment is not restricted to any particular decade. And fortunately for Marine Sgt. Gray, one of the historic peace churches was located not far from where he was stationed when he had his epiphany.

14 God’s door left open

God’s door is open to us. God is ready to receive us. This is the message of Rev. 3:8, explains David Young. It is a message that is at once exciting and challenging. “Whenever we feel afraid or tired or discouraged, God is present, reaching out to us,” Young says.

18 Where have all the prophets gone?

Ah, the scribes and the Pharisees—those scoundrels who tried to trick Jesus at every turn. They laid a trap for him on the Sabbath, but Jesus was ready for them, ready to speak truth to power. But wait a minute, says Joshua Brockway, are we jumping to conclusions? “It is too easy to paint this as a conflict between love and legalism.” Brockway encourages us take a second look at the familiar passage.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 From the Publisher
- 3 In Touch
- 6 Reflections
- 7 The Buzz
- 20 News
- 25 Youth Life
- 26 Media Review
- 27 Letters
- 29 Turning Points
- 32 Editorial

Online translators have gotten good enough that they can now be depended on for certain translating tasks. But they do sometimes generate interesting wording.

Take this description of an apartment for rent in Paris: "All styles are present, the quality craftsmanship in the cozy lounge of the major brands, the Montorgueil district form a mixed trend and furiously."

I guess that's a good thing.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Sometimes it's difficult to know whether the culprit is a computer program or simply a less-than-fluent human. From a sign posted in the security area of an airport in Japan: "A Stern Examination Is Being Enforced. It's made to understand that it takes examination time from being carrying out examination strengthening a little."

I think that means, "Be patient."

There are so many examples of mangled English that it's easy to forget that you don't actually need two languages for a message to get lost in translation. In fact, we can go a lifetime without realizing that we're misunderstanding each other.

Chronic misunderstanding may be good enough in some quarters. But in the church we long for a higher standard.

In the mid-1990s, when computerized translation was a new phenomenon, a Brethren Press employee decided to check it out. He entered, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He translated it into Russian, and then back into English. The result? "The vodka is strong, but the meat is rotten."

Speaking of strong drink, in the second chapter of Acts there were a few accusations of public drunkenness. In reality it was God's Spirit, which somehow made it possible for people of many tongues to understand each other. Compared to them we are people of few tongues, but we surely do have different vocabularies of faith.

Fortunately, though we are weak the Spirit is a willing translator. Perhaps we too can find ourselves amazed and astonished.

Wendy McFadden

HOW TO REACH US

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What is your story?

Our church family at Arlington (Va.) Church of the Brethren has quite a few programs in which I love to take part: anything we do with or for children—from backpacks of food to gifts at Christmas; supplying clothes for needy men and women; and even bingo-calling for the elderly at a neighborhood retirement home.

But when our pastor, Nancy Fitzgerald, asked those of us at a church retreat recently to write about a program that moves us the most, I chose AFAC—the Arlington Food Assistance Center.

The center itself has put on a brighter face over the years, with newly painted walls, pictures, and flowers here and there. And it has seen increased community involvement due in large part to the enthusiastic commitment by AFAC management and staff.

But it is the clients at AFAC who weigh on my mind. Each time I volunteer there, the faces, the postures, the bags (mostly plastic or threadbare cloth), and the little slips of paper noting the amount of food to be received by each family, stay with me. My mind is full of questions as I greet each person coming through the door. I find myself wondering: “What happened to you? How did you get here? What is your story?”

Aged, dark, and bent-over grandmother—with gray hair sprouting from beneath your woolen cap, arthritic fingers clasping the well-worn handle of a shopping cart—what happened to you? How many mouths are you trying to feed on so little?

And another—tall and wiry, pale and handsome—your gentle face and nervous smile following me as you wait your turn to shop among the donated food. How did you get here? What has hurt you so deeply in this life?



Arlington (Va.) Church of the Brethren sends 10-12 volunteers to AFAC's distribution center the first Saturday of every other month. The group helps distribute food to the 100-130 families who arrive on that morning.

And still another—proud in a coat with fancy trim, struggling to maintain your dignity while three impatient little ones dart about—what is your story? From what heights do you feel you have fallen?

I go to the office to get something and when I return a little girl looks up at me and asks, “Do you work here?”

“No,” I reply, smiling at her and smoothing a strand of her thick, shiny braid. “I’m volunteering today.”

“Why?” she asks, innocently.

“So I can come here and see your beautiful face!”

I tell her.

I continue with my work but begin wondering how many of those visiting that day have been looking at *me*, and wondering what happened to me, how I got there, and what my story may be. —Robyn Reals

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.



YOU SAID IT

“Sabbath is not a reprieve from life, but the putting to an end the restlessness that prevents deep engagement with it.”

—Illinois/Wisconsin Church of the Brethren district executive Kevin Kessler

BY THE NUMBERS

58,000

Dollar amount of a grant approved by the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board in March to support agricultural development in North Korea.

Dominican Brethren hold annual assembly

Iglesia de los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren) in the Dominican Republic held its 2012 Asamblea Feb. 24-26. The annual assembly was “really positive,” said general secretary Stan Noffsinger, who attended along with Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer and mission liaison Daniel d’Oleo.

Two Brethren leaders from Haiti represented l’Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Haitian Church of the Brethren). The two countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, and many members of the DR church are of Haitian background. Also at the assembly were workcampers from Atlantic Northeast District led by Earl K. Ziegler, a long-time supporter of the DR church.

Following the Asamblea, Wittmeyer met with DR church leaders to talk about the microfinance community development program of the Dominican church, and a meeting also was held with a leading Haitian-Dominican pastor to hear concerns for those of Haitian descent living in the DR.

Noffsinger also spent time with the Los Guaricanos congregation, and visited in the homes of church members. Wittmeyer and d’Oleo accompanied the workcamp group to San Jose de los Llanos, where they worked on a building project in cooperation with the Sabana Torza congregation.

Both at the Asamblea and in his visits with church members, Noffsinger reported seeing evidence of a mature church that is “engaging society, leading to spiritual and community transformation.” He praised the DR Brethren for publishing a transparent and fully audited financial report this year, and expressed admiration for the combination of evangelism, church planting, and peace work that is being carried out in various congregations.

He lifted up the example of the Guaricanos congregation and its five preaching points. The Guaricanos church has a goal of expanding that effort to 10 preaching points,



Brethren leaders pose for a photo at the Dominican church's 2012 Asamblea (from left): Isaias Tena, moderator of Iglesia de los Hermanos and pastor of the San Luis congregation in the Dominican Republic; Earl K. Ziegler, a longtime supporter of the Brethren in the DR, who was at the Asamblea with a group of workcampers from Atlantic Northeast District; and Daniel d'Oleo, who is serving as a mission liaison between the Church of the Brethren in the US and the Brethren in the DR.

Noffsinger said, and is deliberately planting in communities where there are social issues that need to be addressed. One preaching point, for example, is in a neighborhood marked by gun violence, prostitution, and gambling. Even as they do evangelism at a weekly open market, the Guaricanos Brethren also have held weapons swaps in which they offered food to people who turned in their guns. Noffsinger said, “There is critical need in that community, and they are reaching out to affect the lives of the people.”

Wittmeyer and Noffsinger both commented on seeing the effects of the global recession on the DR’s economy, which is “dismal” in Wittmeyer’s words. In part, this results from a decline in tourism, he said. There was a decline in attendance at the Asamblea because of economic difficulties among church members, he added, as many were already surviving on subsistence wages. “They’re facing the same kinds of things (as North American Brethren),” he said. “Staggering increase in the price of gasoline, increases in the price of food.” During the trip, the American church leaders noticed that the price of gas in the DR had risen above \$7.50 per gallon.

Country church, city church

For five years, Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren in Ashley, Ind., has been in partnership with Peace United Church of Christ in Fort Wayne, Ind., and the Foods Resource Bank. Members from Pleasant Chapel (“the country church”) have donated and farmed nearly 20 acres of land each year, while members from Peace (“the city church”) have been in charge of fundraising.

The two churches meet throughout the year for different worship services, programs, and ice cream socials. At the end of October, members meet for an Annual Harvest Celebration. Attendees watch farmers harvest the fields with combines, take horse and wagon rides, participate in programs with special guests, and enjoy a meal and a time of fellowship.

“Throughout our partnership, we’ve been able to raise more than \$77,000 to help projects in Zambia, Kenya, North Korea, Bolivia,

Guatemala, Uganda, and Mozambique,” said Pleasant Hill pastor Val Kline. “To God be the glory!”

Shortly after both churches agreed to participate in the program, they found themselves without pastors. Thankfully, the churches kept the program going. And, current pastors (Val Kline at Pleasant Chapel and Christen Pettit Miller at Peace—once students together at Manchester College) are now working together with their congregations in this program.

REMEMBERED

Rosemary Holderreed Keller, 89, of Portland, Ore., died Aug. 28. In the late '40s she worked for Brethren Volunteer Service as a nursing assistant in the Elgin (Ill.) State Mental Hospital, and then for two years as a secretary for the Brethren Service Commission. In 1948, she was assigned to work in Nigeria for the Foreign Mission Commission, teaching at Hillcrest Boarding School for two years. She was featured in an Oct. 23, 1948 issue of *MESSENGER*.

Esther Craig, 95, passed away Feb. 12 in South Bend, Ind. She retired in 1981 from Brethren Press, after working for 25 years for the Church of the Brethren. She also was an early Brethren Volunteer Service worker, volunteering at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., after World War II, and was a longtime supporter of Heifer Project and later Heifer International. Her father, George, was instrumental in the beginning of Heifer. She was featured in the Feb. 1995 *MESSENGER* for having a personal goal to contribute the cost of one heifer a year ever since the start of the project. "Many years her donation did not reach that goal," the magazine reported. "She joyfully remembers 1957, when she first achieved it. There is rich reward, she explains, in pondering how many offspring may have been passed along since that first heifer she bought 37 years ago." Craig was a member of Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, where funeral services were held on Feb. 16.

Brethren Voices keep speaking

The February edition of *Brethren Voices* tells the story of how one Church of the Brethren congregation is continuing the work of Jesus. Portland Peace Church of the



Brethren Voices creator and producer Ed Groff monitors the controls in the Portland studio during the production of an upcoming program.

Peace Church of the Brethren, tailored for congregations to air on local community access cable television, or for use by study groups or Sunday school classes. In March, *Brethren Voices* featured the work and photographs of Laura Sewell, who served in India as a missionary for the Church of the Brethren from 1946-84. In May, *Brethren Voices* features Jim Lehman of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., who is known for his writing about the Brethren and his involvement with the annual Song and Story Fest family camp. To order a copy or subscribe to the show, contact Groff at groffprod1@msn.com.

Brethren in Oregon has transformed Super Bowl Sunday to "Souper Bowl Sunday," making a gift to the community and having fun—all at the same time. Members of the church put together packages of bean soup for the community's emergency food program, Snow Cap. "Host John Zunkle and his crack on-field-reporters interview the MVPs of this year's record-breaking 'Souper Bowl Sunday,'" said an announcement from producer Ed Groff.

Brethren Voices is a community television program offered by Portland (Ore.)

MAY IS OLDER ADULT MONTH


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*Believing in promise and
venturing toward possibility.*
—Cuy E. Wampler, Jr.



Church of the Brethren

Give us Barabbas

One of the things that folks have noticed from the very beginning of New Testament studies is that Joseph, Mary's husband and the man who served as father to the boy Jesus, is no longer around by the time Jesus starts his ministry. The speculation has usually been that Joseph had died. Some have suggested that he was much older than Mary and died of natural causes. Perhaps that is still open for discussion.



I once wrote a story in which Jesus was a young teenager helping Joseph at a construction site. An accident occurred. A stone fell from the scaffolding above. Joseph saw it, pushed Jesus out of the way, and was hit himself and killed. I told the story in that way because it seemed to me to inform the way that Jesus came to feel about his father in heaven. The intimacy with which he talked about God was out of step with his time. He did not see God as a distant law-giver who kept score and plotted appropriate judgment for transgressors. He seems to have thought of God in very personal terms. He called God Abba and taught his followers to do the same. In modern terms that would be like calling God Dad or Papa. It was very informal and intimate. It seems to me that such a dif-

ferent understanding of God from the cultural norm came from somewhere. If indeed Joseph had died while Jesus was still a youth, then the quality of their relationship must have contributed to the way Jesus came to see God, his father in heaven. At least that makes sense to me. And it leads me to another idea.

All four of our gospel accounts of the condemnation of Jesus mention that after Pilate had spoken with Jesus and examined the evidence against him, he wanted to

release him. Three of the four accounts mention that there was a tradition that during Passover the Roman governor would release a prisoner for the crowd. Releasing Jesus to them seemed to be the solution to Pilate's dilemma, but the crowd would not have it. They wanted a man named Barabbas, instead. Barabbas is described as everything from a bandit (John) to a rebel who had committed murder during an insurrection (Luke). Matthew gives the fullest account of this episode. In the New Revised Standard translation Matthew goes so far as to identify Barabbas as a notorious prisoner whose first name was Jesus.

In Hebrew there seems to have been at least a couple of ways of identifying a person. One was to clarify where they came from: Jesus of Nazareth, for example. Another way was to clarify which family they belonged with. The way to do this was to attach Bar, meaning "son of," to the name. As an example of that, see Matthew 16:17, where Simon Peter is identified as Simon Bar Jona, or Simon the son of Johanan.

In the case of Barabbas, my concordance translates the name as meaning "father's son." So Matthew gives us this interesting question, thrown out to the crowd by Pilate. "Whom do you want me to release to you," he asked, "Jesus, Papa's son, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" God orchestrates some interesting symbolism. Of course, seen with the eyes of faith, the answer is "Yes,

WE ARE ALL BARABBAS, NOTORIOUS PRISONERS WHO ARE DAUGHTERS AND SONS OF ABBA. AND JUST AS IT WAS NEARLY 2,000 YEARS AGO, OUR RELEASE FROM BONDAGE AND DEATH IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THAT OTHER FATHER'S SON, THE ONE THAT WE STILL CALL THE MESSIAH.

release God's son who is called the Messiah."

But if we are to see with the eyes of faith, we must also realize that we are all Barabbas, notorious prisoners who are daughters and sons of Abba. And just as it was nearly 2,000 years ago, our release from bondage and death is possible because of that other father's son, the one that we still call the Messiah. **WJ**

Michael Titus is pastor of Sunnyslope Church of the Brethren in Wenatchee, Wash.

QUOTE WORTHY

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.”

—Jimi Hendrix

“In a piece of stained glass, there is one light that shines behind the window, but each section of the glass reflects its own color. Side by side they are different colors, but together they make a beautiful window, each piece contributing to the whole.”

—from “One Light, Many Candles,” a presentation of readings and music from Elizabeth Stookey and Noel Paul Stookey (formerly of Peter, Paul & Mary), March 18, at Claremont United Church of Christ, Claremont, Calif.

“God is indeed in our midst, as God is the treasure within each person present in any given circle of faithful people.”

—South-Central Indiana Church of the Brethren district executive Beth Sollenberger

“There’s a concern whenever people are attacked for their faith—it’s so against what we believe in as Americans. I hope everyone is upset about this.”

—Rabbi Jordan Millstein of Temple Sinai of Bergen County in Tenafly, N.J., after a string of arson and graffiti attacks on four synagogues across northern New Jersey

“In the minds of millions of Americans, family planning of any kind equals abortion. Facts tell a different story: It is the lack of family planning that often leads to abortion.”

—Richard Cizik, president of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, writing in a commentary in *The Daily Climate* titled “Family planning is both godly and green”

“As a Christian leader, Dr. Warren believes Christ-followers are commanded to love and respect everyone. He also believes in the common good and that those who may not agree on everything can still work together.”

—A. Larry Ross, media representative for Saddleback Church, writing a commentary in *The Orange County Register* about megachurch leader Rick Warren’s outreach to Muslims

CULTUREVIEW

➔ **Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams** is stepping down at the end of the year, calling an end to a tumultuous decade as leader of a global Anglican Communion that has been sharply divided over sexuality and gender. Williams, 61, renowned for his formidable learning, announced he will take up a new post as master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. “I would hope that my successor has the constitution of an ox and the skin of a rhinoceros,” he said. Williams was appointed in 2002 as Archbishop of Canterbury, the senior official in the Church of England and the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, which says it represents 85 million people worldwide.

➔ **Theological faculties in the Republic of Korea** are preparing for the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which is to take place in the Korean city of Busan in late October and early November 2013. On March 23, 2012, a staff representative of the WCC gave an update on assembly planning to the annual congress of the Korean Association of Accredited Theological Schools (KAATS) meeting on the campus of Yonsei University in Seoul.

➔ At a Roman Catholic church center near the Kenyan town of Thika, **red roses were exchanged among faith leaders on Valentine’s Day** as reminder of their call to love and care for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. The Christian and Muslim leaders had gathered under the Kenyan chapter of the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS to discuss how to strengthen current approaches being used to fight the epidemic.

➔ **Amid renewed tensions over the Falkland Islands**, the Argentinean Methodist Church has sent a letter to the Methodist Church of Great Britain, expressing its desire for their governments to resolve their issues peacefully. “A war is always a human failure in the light of God’s project that we share his creation and that we all enjoy the resources that he has given us,” wrote Bishop Frank de Nully Brown. “The issue of the Malvinas Islands is, for the Argentinean people and our church, an extremely sensitive and delicate one, given the claim that our country has made for the sovereignty of the islands for many years.”



JUST FOR FUN: CHRONOLOGY

STATIONS OF THE CROSS In many Christian traditions, the Stations of the Cross are important markers along the path toward Easter. Can you put the 14 stations below into their traditional order? Answers are printed below.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Jesus meets his Mother | j. Jesus falls the second time |
| b. Jesus falls the third time | k. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem |
| c. Jesus dies on the cross | l. Jesus is nailed to the cross (Crucifixion) |
| d. Jesus is condemned to death | m. Jesus is laid in the tomb and covered with incense. |
| e. Jesus is stripped of his garments | n. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus |
| f. Jesus accepts the cross | |
| g. Simon of Cyrene carries the cross | |
| h. Jesus falls the first time | |
| i. Jesus’ body is removed from the cross | |

ANSWERS: The traditional order of the stations is as follows: 1-d, 2-f, 3-h, 4-a, 5-g, 6-n, 7-i, 8-k, 9-b, 10-e, 11-f, 12-c, 13-l, 14-m.



Bearing witness for peace in a distracted society

by Mike McKeever

The Iraq war ended on December 18th of last year, apparently—at least according to the news. About a month later, I did a Google search and poked around the Internet for lessons learned about the “end” of the war, and was astounded by the paltry number of results and murky thinking I found. Evidently, the official conclusion of nearly nine years of war in Iraq had occasioned precious little in the way of reflection, wisdom, or lessons for the future. At that point, I drew this comic strip and hung it outside my office door at Judson University in Elgin, Ill., where I teach. Clearly, we live in a society with a short attention span for things of consequence, yet are easily distracted by the trivial and immediate.

At Judson, there was initially a robust amount of discussion during the ramp-up to the war. Posters appeared asking questions about “Blood for Oil?” Faculty and student forums were organized to debate the issues and foster campus awareness. Opinions were expressed across the political spectrum. Though I inadvertently brought the discussion to a grinding

halt at times by quoting from the Sermon on the Mount or intimating the relevance of the cross, it was a dynamic conversation that energized the campus to wrestle with a range of ethical questions. Less than two years later, however, there was little if any indication on campus that our country was at war. The attention of the campus had drifted to other matters. I was struck by the fact that a student could be in college during a time of war and scarcely be aware of the fact.

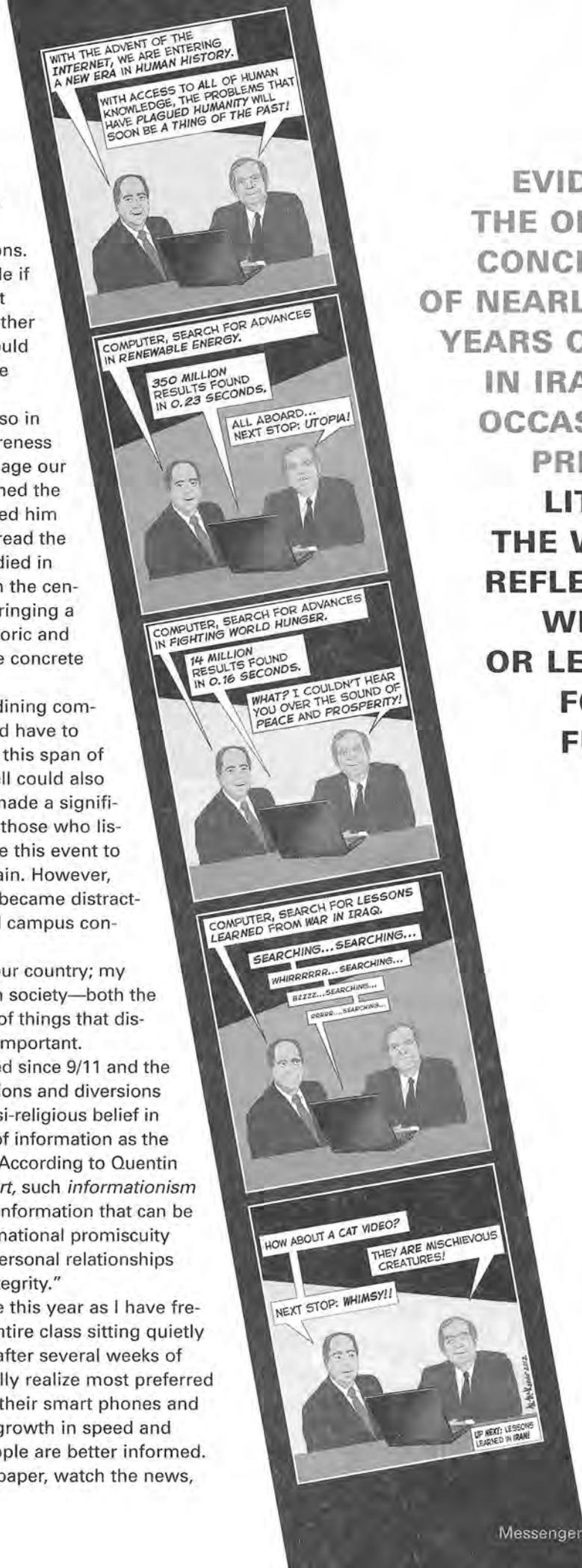
It seemed like something needed to be done, so in the fall of 2005 I organized an event to raise awareness of the human toll of the war by that point, re-engage our students, and reboot the conversation. I approached the most hawkish professor on campus and persuaded him to co-sponsor an event where volunteers would read the names of the 1,800 Americans who had already died in Iraq. For 30 hours we would stand at a podium in the center of campus, each minute reading a name and ringing a bell. My hope was to strip away the abstract rhetoric and symbolism surrounding the war and focus on the concrete realities of its human cost.

Since we were strategically located near our dining commons, members of the campus community would have to pass by the observance four or five times during this span of time for meals. Every minute for two days the bell could also be heard across campus. The cumulative effect made a significant impact on those of us who read names and those who listened. I had asked student leaders to agree to use this event to initiate a forum that focused on the war once again. However, after a flurry of media attention, student leaders became distracted with other matters, discussion fizzled out, and campus concerns once again drifted to other issues.

In reality, my little campus is a microcosm of our country; my students reflect characteristics typical of American society—both the good and the bad. The truth is there are all kinds of things that distract us from paying attention to what is actually important. Technologically speaking, a great deal has changed since 9/11 and the beginning of the Iraq war; there are more distractions and diversions than ever. To be sure, many appear to hold a quasi-religious belief in unbridled bandwidth and the free dissemination of information as the true hope for our public and personal fulfillment. According to Quentin J. Schultze, author of *Habits of the High-Tech Heart*, such *informationism* worships technology and has a relationship with information that can be accurately characterized as “promiscuous.” Informational promiscuity undermines organic community and fosters “impersonal relationships based on feigned intimacies and lacking moral integrity.”

This point was made emphatically clear to me this year as I have frequently entered my classroom only to find the entire class sitting quietly in the dark, not even talking to each other. Only after several weeks of telling them they needn’t sit in the dark did I finally realize most preferred this because it is easier to look at the screens of their smart phones and computers. Though there has been exponential growth in speed and access to information, there is little evidence people are better informed. The majority of my students do not read a newspaper, watch the news,

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In 2010, students at Manchester College helped set up an "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit on the campus mall. Eyes Wide Open has been a traveling exhibition by the American Friends Service Committee to demonstrate the human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Courtesy of Manchester College

FEW AMERICANS GRASP THE HUMAN TOLL OR SCALE OF DEVASTATION OF THE WAR. ... EVEN AS EARLY AS 2007, NUANCED ESTIMATES RANGED FROM 600,000 TO 1.2 MILLION. IF I WERE TO ORGANIZE A REMEMBRANCE FOR IRAQIS KILLED IN THE WAR AS I HAD DONE IN 2005, IT WOULD TAKE TWO YEARS TO READ THE NAMES.

nor are they intentional about staying informed of world events online. Though if they had, during the war they would have encountered a trickle of information that had been well-managed by the government. In fact, a number of the best-known images from the war were really staged events, such as bringing down Saddam's statue or George W. Bush landing on an aircraft carrier in front of a banner reading "Mission Accomplished."

In retrospect, it would seem the mainstream media itself became distracted and lost its focus on the war. During the Vietnam era, when there were only three major television networks with the same evening news slot, images of the human price of war was a nightly occurrence. However, only a year after "Shock and Awe," just two Western news agencies had full-time photojournalists in Iraq. As the situation devolved, remaining photographers accepted being "embedded" with American troops, without access to detainees, hospitals, bombing sites, and unable to publish photos depicting the tragedy of the dead or injured. Photographs deemed controversial often led to the expulsion of journalists from Iraq. Stateside, the Bush administration prohibited photos of returning caskets and banned photographers from funerals, even if invited by the families.

Consequently, few Americans grasp the human toll or scale of devastation of the war. Today in Iraq, a country of 30 million, there are now 4.5 million orphans, 600,000 of whom live on the streets. Seven million Iraqis live below the poverty line and 15 million live in slum conditions—triple the number at the beginning of the war. Nearly 2 million households depend upon women, mostly widows, as the sole source of income. Nearly all media sources casually toss around the phrase "tens of thousands" when referring to Iraqi deaths, grossly underestimating the scale of desolation. Even as early as 2007, nuanced estimates ranged from 600,000 to 1.2 million. If I were to organize a remembrance for Iraqis killed in the war as I had done in 2005, it would take two years to read the names.

The final tally of American soldiers killed is close to 4,500, while the number of "official" wounded is listed at 32,226. However, this number reflects only those narrowly defined as *wounded in battle*. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2008, the number of soldiers injured was closer to a half million when taking into account those with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress, depression, hearing loss, and other significant and enduring health problems. Other studies have doubled that figure. More startling is the fact that during the last two years of the war, more American soldiers committed suicide than were killed in combat. In 2010, 468 soldiers took their own lives, compared to 462 killed in fighting.

Though our own government was fairly successful at distracting our attention and controlling the flow of images and information of the war in our own country, such was not the case in Iraq and the wider Arab world. To this day, the most widely published and defining image of the war in the Middle East remains that of abused prisoners at Abu Ghraib. While the small-scale, American ceremony marking the end of the war took place in Baghdad under strict security with no major Iraqi leaders present, in other cities, Iraqi officials and clerics celebrated the end of the war in front of banners of burning American Humvees. In the Muslim world, the war was assessed by the ugly realities in Iraq itself rather than by our own rhetoric and rationalization. The reality in Iraq is that we are not leaving because we are victorious liberators, but because the majority of Iraqis do not want us there.

Recently I was having a discussion with other faculty about the differences between a college freshman now and 10 years ago. What difference did it make to have grown up in a country where cars have always been covered with flags and yellow ribbons, in a country that has been at war for most of our students' lives? Are they aware that it wasn't always necessary to have bumper stickers to remind us, "Torture Is Always Wrong!" This was not a gray area a few years ago. What does it mean to come of age in an America distracted from the consequences of its moral actions by its own sense of vulnerability and victimhood? Indeed, Scott Bader-Saye, author of *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear*, believes that the most significant outcome of 9/11 is that America has become a victim and is having difficulty negotiating the ethical challenges of our new identity. "The situation is particularly complex because America is not a powerless, voiceless, or marginalized victim. We were (and are) the most powerful military force in the world. Thus it is not surprising that we quickly caved in to the temptation to mix a lethal cocktail of righteous anger and unbending power. The moral challenge for the victim comes in the temptation to use one's suffering as a shield to deflect moral questions."

The ambiguity and distractions of the end of the Iraq war have created a kind of pernicious symmetry with the deception and false pretenses originally used to justify America's actions. The reason for the war in Iraq was a moving target from the outset and remains quite fuzzy at its conclusion. In contrast to the bluster of declarations leading up to war, claims regarding the end of the United States' involvement have been modest, carefully parsed statements of public relations professionals. The president's final speech concerning our mission and accomplishments in Iraq also remained quite vague.

As we transition from Iraq and head toward a presidential election, peacemakers should not lose their own focus. Already the war in Iraq has become a mere political football tossed about, an abstract symbol with little connection to its grim, human realities. Regardless of election outcomes, we must remember that the power of war can seduce a president from either party. In the end, neither party has a commitment to establishing shalom—peace with justice. Indeed, despite our bloody folly in Iraq, already the drums of war with Iran are beating.

Perhaps America's memory loss and lack of ability to account for our actions suggests that, after nearly a decade of war, we are suffering some kind of post-traumatic stress disorder. We have a short attention span and are easily distracted. We have experienced much but are unable to learn. We possess vast information but little wisdom.

Despite our trauma, perhaps the end of one war may create a window of openness such as the one immediately following 9/11. Perhaps this time we can chart a different course. Let us pray that the distractions and detours of the long war do not lead us to detachment and indifference. Let us nurture reflection and discernment. Let us pray for wisdom and empowerment to continue to find creative opportunities to bear witness to the peace that our distracted and desperate world so urgently needs. ❧

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Mike McKeever is professor of biblical studies at Judson University in Elgin, Ill., where he also directs the *Reel Conversations* film series. He is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

by Randy Miller

A different shade of chivalry



Linda K. Williams

Sgt. Corey Gray follows his conscience

Conscientious objectors don't make the headlines these days. Certainly not when compared with the '60s and early '70s, when the Vietnam War was raging and the draft was in full force, and COs—not to mention draft resisters—tended to get a fair amount of attention.

Today, with no draft, and wars that have been "sanitized for your protection" (no photos of flag-draped coffins allowed, and an embedded media corps whose coverage of our involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan have been carefully orchestrated), this may not be surprising. After all, with no draft, those who enter military service do so of their own volition. Those who are morally opposed to war probably

wouldn't sign up for military service in the first place.

But sometimes a switch is flipped in the conscience of someone who chose to enlist—spiritual and moral awakenings can arise at the most inopportune times. That's what happened to Marine Sgt. Corey Gray when he was in boot camp a couple years ago. But when something like that happens, where do you turn for support, advice, and guidance? Fortunately for him, there was a Church of the Brethren not far from where he was stationed.

"I did a Google search for 'Christian peace church,' and found First Church of the Brethren in San Diego," Gray explained over a plate of Thai food in Irvine, Calif., recently. "I called the church and they suggested I come by. They also offered to review my application for CO status. They told me, 'We think what you're doing is right and we support you wholeheartedly.'"

Thus began the long and often arduous path in his request for conscientious objector status and exemption from his service as a Marine.

But why did he join the Marines in the first place?

"When I was in community college in Oregon, I began noticing those yellow rubber magnets on the bumpers of cars. It felt like cheap patriotism, and I was sick of it," he recalled. "Then I realized I'd been guilty of the same kind of thing, so I decided to enlist. This was July 2005. I was 18."

Before he did his Google search for peace churches, however, he had become involved with other religious groups. Following his spiritual awakening after being hospitalized with a leg injury ("While I was on medical leave, I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in three days"), he sought out first a Baptist church, and then an Apostolic church. At the latter, he was given a book called *Total Forgiveness*, by R. T. Kendall.

"I read it and thanked them, and I told them what I learned from it. 'God forgives everyone!' I said. They said,



During Sgt. Corey Gray's initial visit to First Church of the Brethren in San Diego, Calif., members gather following worship to learn more about how they might assist and encourage him in his quest for conscientious objector status.



Linda Williams (left) and Byron and Marianne King (right), of San Diego's First Church of the Brethren, went to support Sgt. Corey Gray at his conscientious objector hearing at the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base in southern California in October.

'No, no, just these people and these people.' I said that if they were talking about *total* forgiveness, then that should include everyone. I left their church soon after that."

A. White, G.I. Hotline Group

That's when he discovered the Brethren in San Diego.

Some people, when they learned of his desire to seek CO status, suggested he should just become a non-combatant, but the way he sees it, non-combatants are still supporting the military.

"There's a motto I remember from the Marine optometry clinic: 'If you can't see them, you can't kill them.' Every position in the military—administrative, logistic—facilitates the war effort," he said. "Working at any job within the Marine Corps would be equally as bad as putting a round through somebody's head. I'd been told numerous times, 'Every Marine is a rifleman.'

"I tried to reconcile my beliefs with my military service, but I couldn't," he added. "The chaplain wrote a letter on my behalf, in which he said, 'I think his beliefs are sincere and deeply held.' I told people, 'This isn't about my getting out of the military, it's about my doing what's right.'"

Extensive paperwork, plus questioning before review panels, ensued over the next several months. It takes considerable time and effort to convince the military that you sincerely do not wish to harm anyone.

But having the backing of one of the three historic peace churches helped. Members of the First Church of the Brethren in San Diego provided counsel, support, and testimony on Gray's behalf.

"Sgt. Gray and I have met a number of times in person when he's attended our church, conversed by phone, and exchanged numerous e-mails," said First Church member Linda Williams in a written statement to his superior officers. "I have shared with him Scriptures and a wide variety of resources to offer new learning to him as he explores God's call upon his life. He has consistently struck me as a sincere, respectful, dedicated young man who has been doing thorough research into the biblical roots of pacifism, and who has truly felt God's calling to lead a life of sharing God's word, and a life of peacemaking through the nonviolent means for which Jesus' teachings clearly call—from our perspective, and now, from Sgt. Gray's perspective."

Gray dotted every "i" and crossed every "t" in the lengthy process. While he continued to hold out hope that he would be granted CO status, he was realistic about the odds.

"What I'm doing is a breach of contract, and I know that," he said last fall, shortly before he learned the out-

come of his request. "There will be penalties. If I was just trying to get out, I could. I'm not trying to get off scot free. I'm prepared to pay the punishment. That's fine. But I have to follow my conscience."

Finally, last December, the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued its statement concerning Sgt. Gray's request. It read, in part:

On 13 December 2011, a Conscientious Objector Status Screening Board convened at Headquarters, US Marine Corps to review Sergeant Gray's request for classification 1-0 Conscientious Objector status. The board considered Sergeant Gray's request, the opinions of the interviewing psychiatrist, the investigating officer, the chaplain, and the recommendations of the chain of command.

The Conscientious Objector Status Screening Board voted that Sergeant Gray provided clear and convincing evidence that his claims of objection to war in any form were the primary controlling force in his life. The board felt that Sergeant Gray's request did meet the criteria established within reference (b), considering the depth and conviction of his belief system.

Based on a review of Sergeant Gray's request, the opinions and recommendations of the chain of command, and the opinions and recommendations of the Conscientious Objector Status Screening Board, Sergeant Gray's request provided by reference (a), has been considered per reference (b), and is approved.

With that major hurdle behind him, what's ahead for the former sergeant?

"I want to go to college and study classical languages and literature, and then pursue an M.Div. degree," he said. Aiming high, he hopes to attend Dartmouth for his bachelor's; Harvard for his master's.

"When I decided to enlist, back in 2005, I called all four branches of the military, but I was struck by the Marines," Gray said. "They talked about integrity. I've had a long-standing interest in chivalry. If I have to risk something for my beliefs, that's chivalry: standing for something."

Apparently, chivalry still exists—and not just in tales of old. 

To hear Corey Gray speak about his journey from Marine sergeant to CO, plan to attend the On Earth Peace insight session at Annual Conference this summer in St. Louis, Mo.



John Ballinger

God's door left open

by David Young

"Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut ..." (Rev. 3: 8a).

The book of Revelation was written at a time when the church faced heavy persecution and was weakened just when it needed strength. The particular church, Philadelphia, to which the above portion of scripture is addressed, is the church that had stayed faithful when others had not. They are known by their works. Even though they have but little power, the message by their angel is that they can make a positive impact.

I want to explore three vital aspects of this text. First, God leaves the door open for the church faithful. Second,

responding to this invitation, God calls the church to mission with others who can discover new life. Finally, no matter how weak they feel, no matter the struggle they face, there is victory for the faithful. Let us look at these topics and how churches can discover new life.

First, God leaves the door open for the church faithful. John writes, "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (vs. 8b). In terms of John's message to the church, we all need inner strengthening to stay faithful to the Word.

Daily prayer is a fertile time of being close to God, letting scripture speak, praying to implement it in a situation that very day. Prayer is a time of resting, of hearing

THE JOY FOR US IS THAT GOD LEAVES THE DOOR OPEN. GOD IS READY TO RECEIVE US. WHENEVER WE FEEL AFRAID OR TIRED OR DISCOURAGED, GOD IS PRESENT, REACHING OUT TO US.

God's call, of becoming more sensitive to people around us, receiving creative ideas, seeking God's forgiveness, finding a new way, and resting deeply in God's love and grace. Prayer is that fertile time to keep our churches fresh. In renewal we discover how imperfect we are, that we have need for the grace of Christ to pull us back.

The joy for us is that God leaves the door open. God is ready to receive us. Whenever we feel afraid or tired or discouraged, God is present, reaching out to us. The message of Revelation for our denomination and all churches is the powerful message of the Good News of the risen Lord. In the midst of the challenges we face as the church today, for the church faithful, God leaves the door open to us.

The second vital aspect of our text is the way Rev. 3:8 goes even deeper. For the church, each congregation has the invitation of the open door of God's grace. There is a certain risk in being faithful. The risk might be that we are not good enough or we might falter or not know what all this will mean if we respond to the open door. But the outcome is deeply moving because in Rev. 3:9 we find that others will be drawn to the vibrant church. Newcomers will witness what a church who receives God's love looks like.

Our family entered such a church this past winter. Due to a miscalculation, we got to this church exactly at the hour of worship. That was a challenge. We found the sanctuary packed. Only the front seats were available. As the service got underway, we were moved to hear church members talking about where God was leading them, and how they were planning their next steps.

But renewal takes deep commitment. Even a church that has entered into renewal may find some reluctant to go along. I recall a man who waited two years to be part of the church's effort. Finally he accepted the invitation to get involved, and his experience spoke to others and drew them in.



Congregations can be helped to discern a vision and come up with steps to implement it. They can be guided in identifying their strengths. They can discover how they touch one another's lives spiritually, look at their core values and identity, and discern a biblical passage to help them clarify their vision and plan. The entire church can work together to discern and fulfill its calling.

As the scripture indicates, it takes a lot of faithfulness to respond to that open door. I marvel at the personal challenges some congregations face. Yet each of them continues on faithfully, and their churches are doing marvelous things. In a telephone call, one pastor went on and on describing the new ministries in his church, finally realizing at the end of the conversation how many things were happening there.

Another part of discovering new energy can come from examining the originating mission of a church. I am absolutely thrilled and inspired when I read the histories of some of our districts. Passion for mission is illustrated by the story of Bristolville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. A fire destroyed the church in 1943 while extensive remodeling was underway. The debris was cleaned out and a temporary roof put on. Services resumed and were held until 1946. But the question arose as to whether they should continue.



SERVANT LEADERSHIP LISTENS DEEPLY, USES SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT TO ASK WHERE GOD IS LEADING, AND FAITHFULLY MOVES INTO DISCIPLESHIP.

The home mission board brought the problem to district conference, which supported the idea of supplying a full-time pastor. They called D.E. Sower to the congregation. Within eight months, 13 new people had joined. They decided to continue, but then faced the problem of building a church during a time of inflated prices. The mission board challenged the men of the district to donate their labor, and contacted Wilbur Shoemaker, a building contractor, to oversee the job. Shoemaker startled the men by saying that if they would support his crew with plenty of help, he would have the building under roof in one day.

The district history reads, "To the music of saw and hammer, and with teamwork that was amazing, the structure literally grew before the almost unbelieving eyes of all. Just as the shadows of evening fell, the building was under roof and the sides were sheathed." By the following Saturday, the building was completed.

This is the kind of work and commitment renewal entails. That is the kind of energy seen today in churches that enter into renewal.

Peter Steinke, in his book *The Door Set Open*, tells about mission drift and the need to find course. He says, "Mission is about God turning toward the world in Christ. Mission is because God is a God of promise. God is trustworthy. God's mission of love results in the defeat of death, the transformation of lives, and the renewal of the whole creation."

Transformation continues as we discover and implement a renewal plan. The plan often calls for strengthening the very basic ministries of the church like youth, Sunday school, or midweek ministry. Congregations are amazed when they discover the resources within themselves to be the church. But it takes time. One pastor speaks of church renewal as "crock pot cooking, not microwave."

The third aspect of our text is the crown. In Revelation, John addresses those who have been faithful to hold onto their crowns. In fact, he says he will make them pillars in the temple of God. "I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God (Rev. 3:12)." In Revelation, there is the victory of the faithful.

Emerging from the spiritual journey is the servant. As Brethren, we know that as our feet are washed, our baptism is renewed, and we are cleansed for service. In turn, we kneel and wash the feet of others. As we serve others, helping them in this journey of renewal, we hold their needs in trust; and then the servant is called into leadership. We lose our lives so others may find life. Servant leadership listens deeply, uses spiritual discernment to ask where God is leading, and faithfully moves into discipleship.

In Revelation 7:17 there is this beautiful passage on the servant as leader: "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life." For us as Brethren, being a servant is at the heart of spiritual transformation. Those who serve will be called into leadership, and they will help genuine spiritual formation happen for others. Who of us have not benefited from often silent servants who, without fanfare or desire for reward, have brought us the knowledge of Christ? And those springs of living water refresh us.

During a recent worship service, people in the congregation were invited to bring forward a lists of strengths that God had given their members. They posted them on the front wall of the sanctuary and dedicated them to God. They invited people to tell of the servant leaders in their own lives, and went on to explore key servant passages in scripture. Then the pastor delivered a message on this theme. They explored how they could take their God-given strengths and go out and serve their community.

Sometimes we wonder where all those great figures in the church have gone, and whether there are any of them around anymore. I sense we have those men and woman in the making among us today.

Today, the door stands open—not just ajar but wide open—and invites us to be the church renewed. We can but humbly, gratefully, respond to God's invitation. ❧

David Young is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. He and his wife, Joan, have developed a church renewal initiative called Springs of Living Water. David is the author of numerous articles and four books, including *Springs of Living Water, Christ-Centered Church Renewal* (Herald Press, 2008). David and Joan will be leading an insight session at Annual Conference in St. Louis this summer. For more information, visit www.churchrenewalservant.org.

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Jesus Teaching near the Temple Treasury by James Tissot

Where have all the prophets gone?

by Joshua Brockway

I've often wondered what it was like to be in the crowd in one of the showdowns between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day. In my mind, it would be kind of like watching the British Parliament, complete with audience participation. I can almost hear the "Ooh" of challenges, and the murmurs of displeasure after each sentence.

I know for us good Brethren, steeped in nonviolence and lovers of decorum that we are, it is troublesome to witness Jesus in a raucous crowd, confronting the powers of the day. Jesus meek and mild is more our style.

An example of this kind of confrontation would be Jesus' encounter with the scribes and Pharisees as described in Luke 6:6-12, in which he is asked whether he would cure a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. To be sure, this is not a civil debate setting. There was no timekeeper and no parliamentarian. Jesus and these leaders had been down this road before. In fact, the opening verses of chapter 6 recount another conflict, in which the disciples gleaned grain on the Sabbath. Now in the synagogue, Jesus is ready for the

"trap." Not only does he see the leaders glaring at him, he knows they are ready to pounce on any action that would clearly break Sabbath law.

But as we have come to know Jesus in the Gospel accounts, he is savvy. As we witnessed in many of the other occasions, he lays the conflicting values before the crowd. "Which is better, to do harm or good on the Sabbath?" And the crowd goes crazy!

There he stands, calling out the very injustice implicit in the legalism. There he is, as he so often does, speaking truth to power. It should be said, though, that the Sabbath laws were meant to be restorative. They were constructed to shape the people into the image of God—as ones taking rest. It is too easy to paint this as a conflict between love and legalism, but really the conflict is over two goods: following the practices of God's people, and incarnating God to those very same people. In this instance, Jesus reveals that the good practice of Sabbath is being used for other, more worldly, ends: power, control, prestige, influence.

He stood there, in the midst of lay and clergy alike, nam-

LIKE JESUS IN THIS TEXT, THE PROPHETIC MOMENT IS NOT THE SPEAKING OF TRUTH TO POWER, IT IS THE HEALING OF THE HAND. IN THAT LITTLE ACTION, JESUS BOTH CHALLENGED THE PROBLEM AND MADE THE CHANGE, NOT TO MAKE THE STATEMENT BUT TO REALLY BEAR FRUIT. THE PROPHETIC ACTION IS BOTH CRITICAL AND HOPE-FILLED.

ing the problem like any prophet of old. In fact, he stood in the long line of tradition, reminding everyone that there is indeed a hierarchy of obligation in the religious life. When practices such as Sabbath come into conflict with loving your neighbor, love wins. That is the prophet Jesus calling the people back into a right order of the religious values.

We have come a significant ways from the prophetic posture of Jesus. Good modernists that we are, we have come to love the prophetic style of Jesus “speaking truth to power.” Yet, is this really what it means to be prophetic? Though the conflict might make us squirm a bit in our seats, truth is we are part of the crowd, usually cheering at the great zing of the religious leaders.

Not long ago, Sprint ran a fantastic commercial. They were advertising their phone plans with a stereotypical CEO: a white, balding guy in a navy suit and power tie, sitting at his desk in the corner office. He is talking to his young, nervous assistant about his new Sprint contract and how much he is saving. Then comes the classic line. The CEO says, “I’m sticking it to the man.” The assistant responds, a bit puzzled: “Sir, you *are* the man.” “Yes I am,” replies the boss. “So,” the assistant says, hesitantly, “you’re sticking it to yourself.”

It’s really a hard pill to swallow, but honestly, we are not prophetic. We really are those with cultural power, capital, and prestige. What is more, we sit smack in the middle of comfort, pointing our fingers at everyone else, thinking we are being prophetic. It is kind of like the commercial—we’re really sticking it to ourselves. Prophets are not really church bureaucrats, and aren’t invited into the halls power. Writing statements and Bible studies and putting on programs are not prophetic actions.

Being a prophet is incarnational in its truest form. Like Jesus in this text, the prophetic moment is not the speaking of truth to power, it is the healing of the hand. In that little action, Jesus both challenged the problem and made the change, not to make the statement but to really bear fruit. The prophetic action is both critical and hope-filled.

From inside the walls of our institutions and congregations it is nearly impossible to be truly and fully prophetic. As our denomination was being built, the modern assumption was that institutions were the way to protect the legacy

of any tradition. By the end of that era, we all began to equate these same institutions with the center of the tradition. Following that line of thought, the Church of the Brethren would be most itself at its most institutional—whether at Elgin or at Annual Conference. This soon translated to our care of the prophetic witness of the tradition. When “Elgin” or “Conference” speaks, the Brethren are prophetic. The incarnational principle—the idea that the prophetic includes an on-the-ground bearing of fruit—was lost. This incarnational principle challenges that modern assumption.

The image of the healed hand reminds us that transformation does not happen at the center of the circle—at the hub of influence or power—but on the ground in the streets around our congregations. When we expect denominational statements or polity to change the practices of Brethren congregations around the world without actually being with them, we are sorely mistaken. When we enter centers of cultural power and assume our statements make a difference, we have swallowed the pill of the institutional church. Real change, real prophetic healing and transformation, is embodied; it is incarnate.

Our work as the Body of Christ is only prophetic insofar as it supports, encourages, and enables prophetic action by our members and our congregations. We can write thousands of pages of prayers, studies, and resources, yet those are prophetic only insofar as they help members of our tradition be prophetic where they are.

The Incarnation is the foundation of the biblical story. When God comes to show the way, the truth, and the life, God comes in the flesh. God no longer makes pronouncements from the clouds, far off from the needs and pain of our world, but gets down to work here. Of course it challenges our cultural assumptions, it confronts the powers that be, and stands in the long line of prophets. But the Incarnation—God really with us—makes the changes and brings hope. That is the beauty of our faith. That is the beauty of the gospel: God transforming all that is, into all that can be. Our work, our toil here as the church, is to embody Jesus the healing prophet where we live. 

Joshua Brockway is director of spiritual life and discipleship for the Church of the Brethren.

Financial report for 2011 includes hopeful signs and cause for concern

Financial results for Church of the Brethren denominational ministries in 2011 include both hopeful signs and cause for concern. Positive results were seen in the Conference Office budget and in certain restricted giving. However, the Core Ministries and other self-funding ministries realized expenses in excess of income.

Total gifts received for the denominational ministries were lower in 2011 than 2010. Congregations gave a total of \$3,484,100, down 14.2 percent from 2010. Total individual giving of \$2,149,800 was down 30.5 percent from the previous year.

Giving to Core Ministries declined \$148,200, or 4.6 percent, for a total of \$3,083,200. Giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF), which fluctuates based on the severity of disasters, remained relatively strong at \$1,811,500, but was lower than 2010 by \$270,900. The Global Food Crisis Fund and Emerging Global Mission Fund both received more gifts than in 2010, totaling \$318,500 and \$72,900, respectively.

The primary source of funding for Core Ministries is donations from congregations and individuals. A steady decrease in donations over time continues to challenge budget and program planning. Staff were able to hold expenses below 2011 budgeted amounts, but expenses still exceeded income by \$65,800.

Projections for the 2012 Core Ministries budget revealed a large gap between anticipated income and expense. In order to match the two, nine positions were eliminated as of Sept. 28, 2011. Other changes were made to reduce expenses or identify additional sources of income.

The New Windsor Conference Center (NWCC) sustained a net loss of \$176,400 in 2011. Sales were slightly higher than 2010, and the loss was not as large as the previous year. However, this result increased the accumulated deficit to \$689,400.

Four other ministries identified as self-funded also rely on sales of goods and services for income. Solid

The Mission and Ministry Board spent quite a bit of its Spring meeting time in Bible study and prayer, such as the moment shown here during an experience of a new "Share and Prayer Triad" led by Congregational Life Ministries executive Jonathan Shively.



Treasurer LeAnn Wine presents financial reports for 2011 to the Mission and Ministry Board at its spring meeting.

attendance and offerings at Annual Conference, coupled with staff efforts to curtail costs, helped the Conference Office end 2011 with income over expense of \$237,200. The positive result eliminated the prior accumulated deficit.

Messenger magazine also ended the year in the black, with a modest income over expense of \$200.

Brethren Press sustained its first loss in three years with a deficit of \$68,900. Factors included decreased sales and the conclusion of a Gahagen grant that had bolstered income for a number of years.

The Material Resources program experienced increased costs in supplies and transportation that led to expense over income of \$31,200.

In the midst of financial struggles, the staff and board continue to be grateful for the faithfulness of donors. The ministries of the Church of the Brethren exist only through the support of those who give generously even during lean economic times.

The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2011 audit. Complete financial information will be available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report, to be published in June 2012.

—LeAnn K. Wine is executive director of Organizational Resources and treasurer of the Church of the Brethren.



Wendy McFadden

Six candles became a focus for worship at the annual meetings of Christian Churches Together (CCT), with the center candle symbolizing the centrality of Christ and the others representing the various "faith families."

Christian Churches Together puts focus on racism, poverty

Christian Churches Together (CCT) completed its annual meeting Feb. 17 in Memphis, Tenn. Attending were 85 national church leaders from the organization's five "faith families": African-American, Catholic, Historic Protestant, Evangelical/Pentecostal, and Orthodox Christian.

The group of men and women of many colors and ethnicities sought together to better understand and more effectively organize to combat racism and poverty in America.

The group visited the National Civil Rights Museum, site of Martin Luther King Jr.'s martyrdom; the Slave Haven Museum, an Underground Railroad safe house; and the historic Mason Temple where King delivered his last speech before he was assassinated. They also heard from speakers such as Bernard LaFayette, co-founder of SNCC and a Freedom Rider during the Civil Rights movement, and Virgil Wood, an organizer for the March on Washington.

Brethren leaders at the meeting included Annual Conference moderator-elect Bob Krouse, attending in place of moderator Tim Harvey (who was visiting a new Brethren movement in Spain); general secretary Stan Noffsinger; and Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden.

"It was really a wonderful meeting," Krouse said in a telephone interview. He highlighted the impact of back-to-back visits to the National Civil Rights Museum and Slave Haven Museum, in a few hours being vividly reminded of the long history of racism in the US, and the struggle against it. Visiting the place where King was

killed "was so powerful," he said. "There it was, the balcony where he was shot. ... And to be reminded of the church's failure to deal with those issues, slavery, busing. It was humiliating, really, to see the failure of the church."

One of the learnings Krouse takes away from the gathering is the appropriateness of what he characterized as a Christian sense of "heartache and profound moral failure" in the face of racism. The meeting as a whole was characterized by a mixture of joy, as well, he said—"joy that we could be there as the church."

What does this mean for the Church of the Brethren? "It's been hard for us to get handles," Krouse answered. "A lot of the issues we've addressed as political rhetoric," he said, adding that Brethren have not addressed racism in a practical way as some other denominations have been trying to do.

One concrete suggestion coming out of the CCT meeting is to focus church planting on multi-ethnic plants in urban areas. Another is to actively acknowledge how racism hurts people in the dominant culture as well as those who are being discriminated against.

"One of the things that was brought home to me . . . was that we on the other side, we also have been victims of it. Our lives have been less rich because of not facing exposure to black culture and issues they have struggled with because of racism.

"The more isolated we are—theologically, culturally, ethnically—it does really limit our lives. The most beautiful quilts are the richly colored."

UPCOMINGEVENTS

April 11-13 Fellowship of Brethren Homes Forum, Cross Keys Village—the Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa.

April 13-14 Bethany Seminary Presidential Forum, Richmond, Ind.

April 13-14 Children's Disaster Services training, Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

April 14-19 Christian Citizenship Seminar, New York City and Washington, D.C.

April 27-28 Children's Disaster Services training, Center Church of the Brethren, Louisville, Ohio

May 3 National Day of Prayer

May 6 National Youth Sunday

May 17 Ascension Day

May 17-19 New Church Development Conference, hosted by Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

May 27 Pentecost

June 1-6 Ministry Summer Service orientation, Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, Ill.

Annual Conference ballot for 2012 is announced

The ballot has been announced for the 2012 Annual Conference, to take place in St. Louis, Mo., on July 7-11. The Nominating Committee of the Standing Committee of district delegates developed a slate of candidates, and the Standing Committee then voted to create the ballot that will be presented to the delegate body in July.

Nominees are listed by position:
Annual Conference Moderator-

Elect: Dava Hensley of Roanoke, Va.; Nancy Sollenberger Heishman of Tipp City, Ohio.

Annual Conference Secretary: James Beckwith of Lebanon, Pa.; Bonnie Martin of Annville, Pa.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: Wendy Noffsinger Erbaugh of Clayton, Ohio; Rebekah Houff of Richmond, Ind.
Pastoral Compensation and

Benefits Advisory Committee: Bernie Fuska of Timberville, Va.; Carol L. Yeazell of Arden, N.C.

Mission and Ministry Board: Area 1 – Connie Burk Davis of Westminster, Md.; Rhonda Ritenour of York, Pa.
Area 2 – J. Trent Smith of New Lebanon, Ohio; Sherry Reese Vaught of Mansfield, Ohio.

Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee: Representing the clergy – James Benedict of New Windsor, Md.; Paul Brubaker of Ephrata, Pa.
Representing the colleges – Celia Cook-Huffman of Huntingdon, Pa.; W. Steve Watson of Harrisonburg, Va.

Brethren Benefit Trust Board: Eric Kabler of Johnstown, Pa.; Karen Pacheco of North Miami Beach, Fla.

On Earth Peace Board: Barbara Wise Lewczak of Minburn, Iowa; Cindy Weber-Han of West Chicago, Ill.

For more information about the 2012 Annual Conference and for online registration, go to www.brethren.org/ac.

Regina Holmes



Dava Hensley

Glenn Riegel



Nancy Sollenberger Heishman

Vision Statement coming to Conference available online

The Vision Statement for the Church of the Brethren, slated for consideration at the 2012 Annual Conference in July, is now available for inspection and review on the Conference website. That was one of the actions taken by a committee charged with interpreting and presenting the statement to the Conference delegates.

The Vision Statement already has been accepted by the Standing Committee of district delegates, which will recommend it for adoption at the gathering in St. Louis, Mo., to take place July 7-11.

The Vision Interpretation and Presentation (VIP) Committee plans to offer additional resources to encourage congregations and members to interact with the Vision Statement prior to its formal adoption.

One of the unique features of this statement is the inclusion of a four-session study guide that congregations, small groups, and individuals can use to consider what it means to live out the meaning of the Vision Statement. In addition, there is a short DVD posted on the Conference website that

presents the statement visually. The VIP Committee hopes to provide a variety of other resources in the near future.

Anyone interested in submitting worship resources or sermon notes associated with the Vision Statement are encouraged to do so, by sending them to the Conference Office at annualconference@brethren.org.

The vision statement, including the study guide, can be accessed and downloaded at www.brethren.org/ac.

VIP Committee members include Bekah Houff and David Sollenberger, from the original Vision Committee, along with Ron Nicodemus and James Sampson, appointees from Standing Committee.

The vision statement to be presented for adoption:

*Through Scripture, Jesus calls us to
live as courageous disciples by word and action:
To surrender ourselves to God,
To embrace one another,
To express God's love for all creation.*

Brethren Volunteer Service

Unit 296. The BVS Winter Orientation Unit took place Jan. 29-Feb. 17 in Gotha, Fla. Volunteers and their placements are: Front row from left—Sophia Mangold from Muenstertal, Germany, serving at ABODE Services in Fremont, Calif.; Amanda Glover of Mountainview Church of the Brethren in Virginia, to SnowCap in Portland, Ore.; Natalie Pence of Mountainview Church is also going to ABODE Services; Marc Kratzer of Nuremburg, Germany, is serving at Talbert House in Cincinnati, Ohio. Middle row—Bryan Eby of Trinity Fellowship Church of the Brethren in



Waynesboro, Pa., going to Hope House in Quinter, Kan.; Willi Berscheminski of Schifferstadt, Germany, to Meeting Ground in Elkton, Md.; Sarah Marie Dotter of Wyomissing (Pa.) Church of the Brethren will serve at Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren; Melissa Wilson of Copper Hill (Va.) Church of the Brethren will be working with Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md.; Laban Wenger of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., will be at CooperRiis in Mill Spring, N.C. Back row—Max Knoll of Meiningen, Germany, is going to Su Casa Catholic Worker in Chicago; MaryBeth Fisher of Hempfield Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa., will work with Highland Park Elementary in Roanoke, Va.; Alex Harney of Creekside Church of the Brethren in Elkhart, Ind., will be working at ABODE Services; Damon Fugate of West Milton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren is going to The Palms in Sebring, Fla.

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

Open roof award nominations

Do you know of a Church of the Brethren congregation or district that has done something extraordinary to serve—or be served by—those with disabilities? Tell us about it, even if it's your own!

Visit www.brethren.org/openroof for the form to nominate this year's recipient.

Nomination deadline: June 1, 2012.

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Dkline@brethren.org
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Church of the Brethren

PERSONNELCHANGES

Steve Bickler has shifted responsibilities at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and is now working half-time in Brethren Press and half-time as support for Buildings and Grounds. He has worked for the Church of the Brethren for 33 years.

Jeff Boshart began March 15 as manager of the Church of the Brethren's Global Food Crisis Fund and Emerging Global Mission Fund. This new position located at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., combines management of the two funds. Most recently Boshart has been the Haiti disaster response coordinator for Brethren Disaster Ministries. He and his wife Peggy previously worked in Haiti from 1998-2000, serving in agricultural development with ECHO (Educational Concern for Hunger Organization). From 2001-04 the Bosharts worked in the Dominican Republic as community development coordinators for the Church of the Brethren, planning and implementing a microloan program.

Deborah Brehm began Jan. 31 as part-

time program assistant in Church of the Brethren Human Resources in Elgin, Ill. She is a previous intern with the office from 2008-10. Most recently she has been a new business processor for Protective Life Insurance Co. She also has been a commercial loan secretary and administrative assistant at Harris Bank in Roselle, Ill.

Nathan Hosler has begun work as advocacy officer with the Church of the Brethren, as of March 1. Located in Washington, D.C., this is a shared position with the National Council of Churches (NCC). His responsibilities include nurturing the Church of the Brethren witness to society and government from a uniquely Anabaptist-Pietist Brethren perspective, with a peace church emphasis on peace and justice. He also represents NCC member churches in advocacy for peace and provides leadership in educational initiatives with NCC member churches and the wider society. Most recently, he and his wife Jennifer have served at Kulp Bible College in northern Nigeria teaching

courses on theology and the practice of peace and reconciliation. He holds a master's degree in International Relations from Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I., and a bachelor's in Biblical Language from Moody Bible Institute. He has done various training courses in peacebuilding, trauma awareness, and restorative justice.

Emily Tyler will begin June 27 as coordinator of workcamps and volunteer recruitment for the Church of the Brethren. The job combines oversight and administration of the youth and young adult workcamps with recruitment of volunteers for Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). This new coordinator position is located within the Global Mission and Service program, reports to the director of BVS, and also works closely with the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Her volunteer work for the Church of the Brethren has included serving as a co-coordinator of National Youth Conference in 2006, working as a BVS volunteer. She also was a coordinator for Young Adult Conference in 2006. She was a member of the National Young Adult Steering Committee 2003-05.

Jill Olson has resigned as a member services representative at Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT). Her final day of employment was March 9. She was originally hired to work as the loan officer for the Church of the Brethren Credit Union in 2008. When the credit union merged with Corporate America Family Credit Union in 2011, she joined the Pension Plan department as a customer service representative and to work on special projects.

Russell and Deborah Payne have accepted the call to serve Southeastern District as co-district executives beginning June 1. Russell Payne is an ordained minister with 30 years of experience as pastor of Coulson Church of the Brethren in Hillsville, Va. Deborah Payne most recently was executive director of Hope House of the Good Shepherd Inc. in Galax, Va. Previously she was business manager for Joy Ranch Inc. in Woodlawn, Va., and worked in the Parent Involvement/Teacher Resource Center of Carroll County Public Schools in Hillsville.



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Eighteen Bridgewater College students volunteered with Habitat's Collegiate Challenge Spring Break 2012.

Bridgewater students build homes in Tennessee

Eighteen students and two staff of Bridgewater (Va.) College volunteered with Habitat's Collegiate Challenge Spring Break 2012, according to a release from the school. The group, accompanied by Jarret and Whitney Smith, director of admissions and director of student activities respectively, left for Maryville, Tenn., on March 4 and returned to campus March 10. The group

worked in partnership with the Blount County Habitat for Humanity affiliate in the Great Smoky Mountains. To raise money for the trip, they held a chili cook-off and sponsored an evening of childcare for Parents' Night Out. This makes the 20th year that Bridgewater students have used their Spring break to work in various Habitat projects.

The **2012 Youth Peace Travel Team** has been named. As they spend time with junior and senior high youth this summer at camps across the Church of the Brethren, the team will teach about peace, justice, and reconciliation, all core values throughout the Church of the Brethren's more than 300-year history. The team is sponsored by the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Advocacy and Peace Witness Office, Brethren Volunteer Service, On Earth Peace, and the Outdoor Ministries Association. Members are: **Katie Furrow** of Monte Vista Church of the Brethren in Callaway, Va.; **Hunter Keith** of Mexico (Ind.) Church of the Brethren; **Kyle Riege** of Camp Creek Church of the Brethren in Etna Green, Ind.; and **Molly Walmer** of Meyerstown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

Students at the University of La Verne, Calif., offered free tax services to local taxpayers during their spring break. Several students are part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, an IRS-sponsored program that helps

low-to-moderate income families and individuals. "Our students have all been trained and are being supervised by our adjunct faculty...who are also IRS employees. Students had to pass an exam to participate in this volunteer program," said professor of

Accounting Renee Miller in a release. They provided free tax filing services to eligible taxpayers as part of the university's efforts to help the communities it serves. Approximately 35 students participated and donated about 40 work hours of their time.

BITS&PIECES

McPherson (Kan.) College has chosen a new campus minister with deep roots in both the spiritual and the scientific. Steve Crain comes to McPherson College from Fort Wayne, Ind., where he has served as director of Christian formation at Trinity Episcopal Church; co-chaplain for Timbercrest Senior Living Community, a Church of the Brethren retirement community; and adjunct faculty at the Department of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Saint Francis. He also has previous experience as a campus pastor at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind.

Ordained in the Church of the Brethren, he holds a bachelor's degree in physics from Stanford, a master's degree in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a master's in history and philosophy of science from the University of Notre Dame from which he also received his doctorate in theology. His academic focus has been on the relationship between theology and natural science. In his spare time, he is a passionate reader and outdoorsman.

Photo by: courtesy of McPherson College



Who are the young adults?

Where are the young adults? Why don't more of them go to church? How can the church serve them better? What do they think about religion? About the denomination? About God? (And, yes, we are thinking about these things!)



GIMBIYA KETTERING

These questions are often asked by adults in the Church of the Brethren trying to understand young adults (perhaps a better term would be "emerging adults," given the range in ages that often extends from high school to young families). These same questions are often at the heart of conversations I have with my peers as we envision our futures, families, and faith.

Two books offer some answers. *The Marriage Plot* and *The Unlikely*

Disciple each describe the concerns of young adult life, and provide insights into how we include religion during the years we are establishing ourselves as adults.

In *The Marriage Plot*, by Jeffery Eugenides, characters Madeleine, Leonard, and Mitchell are college students trying to answer existential questions while studying for final exams and going on dates. In a novel that seems as relevant as if it were set last week, the characters party and carry on as one might expect. Yet they seem to defy stereotypes. Eugenides, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is a master storyteller who carefully details their conflicted motivations and their search for meaning in a way that makes my heart ache for each of them.

Madeleine, in considering which of her two suitors to marry, is caught in the Victorian literary conundrum from which the title is drawn. This age-old question is made modern with considerations of feminism, mental health, and the institution of marriage itself. Leonard, a wunderkind biology major, realizes that the answers he finds in the lab are not enough, as mental illness forces him to seek deeper truth for his life. Mitchell, the other suitor, is a religion major who often feels he must hide his church attendance from his peers. He directly confronts the theological question of "saved by acts or faith" as he volunteers at Mother Teresa's home for the dying and contemplates going to divinity school.

Reading *The Marriage Plot*, I remembered how it felt to

be in my early 20s—dating, wanting a career and marriage, and not knowing what was next. Upon reaching the end of the book, I wanted to talk to people about it, and knew that it would stimulate great book club conversation.

In *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*, Kevin Roose, a non-observant Quaker and Brown University student, describes a semester he spent at Liberty University. Liberty is also known as Jerry Falwell's "Bible Boot Camp," where students attend mandatory sermons and creationism is a part of the curriculum.

Roose transfers to Liberty because he genuinely wants to understand the "God Divide" in America and gain a better understanding of the evangelical, conservative Christians that he has only heard about through the news media. He takes religious history and Bible studies courses, attends prayer meetings, develops a mentoring relationship with a campus pastor, reads the *Left Behind* series, and sings with the Thomas Road choir each Sunday. He even interviews Dr. Falwell for the student newspaper just days before the evangelist's death. He has honest conversations with his new evangelical friends about dating on a campus that only allows hand-holding, what it means to be saved, and how they see God.

Although he disagrees with the school's teachings about global warming, evolution, race, and sexuality, Roose truly respects and admires his fellow students. Through his open-hearted approach, he is able to share insights with readers about the lives of evangelical college students, and he continues to stay in touch with his new friends, praying for them even after his return to Brown University. Roose courageously describes his how his faith has emerged from this experience and how he thinks about God, religion, and prayer.

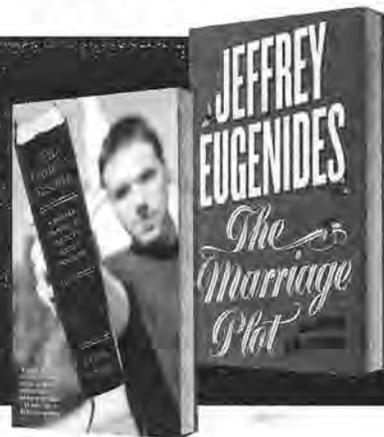
For those seeking insight into minds and hearts of emerging adults, I strongly recommend both of these books, as each considers college students on different ends of the religious spectrum, and reflects the diversity of faith among emerging adults in the Church of the Brethren. Additionally, both books feature Quakers who have similar Pietist considerations of the conception of God, insights into individual faith, and the importance of service and good works. ❧

Gimbiya Kettering is the Undiscovered Voices Scholar at the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Md. Her fiction has been published in national literary magazines including *The Kenyon Review* and *The Crab Orchard Review*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Marriage Plot*. **Publisher:** Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2011. **Pages:** 406. **List price:** \$28. *The Marriage Plot* "... possesses the texture and pain of lived experience," says *New York Times Sunday Book Review* critic William Deresiewicz. **Title:** *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*. **Publisher:** Grand Central Publishing, 2009. **Pages:** 336.

List price: \$21.99. "Kevin Roose has produced a textured, intelligent, even sympathetic account of his semester at Liberty University," says Randall Balmer, Episcopal priest and professor of American religious history at Barnard College, Columbia University. "He eschews caricature and the cheap shot in favor of keen observation and trenchant analysis. *The Unlikely Disciple* is a book of uncommon wisdom and insight. I recommend it with enthusiasm."



How about a truce?

I read with much interest and concern the full-page advertisement in the December MESSENGER by the Supportive Communities Network, with their invitation to "join company with them as they follow Jesus" in accepting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons. I expect their intention was to reach out to Brethren readers, hoping to bridge the gap between them by describing the blessings they have experienced in Christian fellowship with their homosexual brothers and sisters.

But what if some of those other readers buy a full-page ad inviting Brethren to join them in their journey with Christ by quoting scriptures that condemn such homosexual relationships and call on followers of Christ to avoid such persons?

It seems that we are faced with a Gordian knot that none of us in our finite wisdom can break. I believe both parties are sincere in their beliefs and interpretation of Scripture. I doubt either party can win the other over to its convictions. However, the debate between us is so hurtful and damaging to our unity in the Body of Christ that to continue it risks a war which I think Brethren on both sides want to avoid.

How about a truce? How about acknowledging that others are just as sincere in their convictions, just as devout in their Christian faith and life, just as committed in their search for biblical and theological truth as we are? How about agreeing to disagree on this issue just as we do on other controversial issues like evolution, pacifism, military service, ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, and other differences in interpretation of Scripture? I believe we do that because we have a higher commitment to Jesus Christ than to the particular doctrines we espouse.

Let's acknowledge that some Brethren believe that God has created homosexual persons in his own image just as he did heterosexual persons; and just as Peter's vision of the sheet coming down from heaven revealed that God was inviting gentiles into the church, so God invites homosexuals into full church fellowship today. Let's also acknowledge that some Brethren

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interpret Scripture to condemn homosexuality in all its forms, and requires that such persons convert to a heterosexual lifestyle or remain celibate in order to participate in the church's life and ministry. Let's agree to live together with those differences, just as we do with our other differences.

This is not a perfect solution. Neither side would win. The differences would remain. But we would maintain the unity of the Body, which is far better than the alternative. Surely God is big enough to wrap his arms around us mortals with our differing understandings and hold us together in the Body of Christ.

Horace Huse
Toledo, Ohio

Love is our essence

Jesus teaches us that God's love is unconditional. As God's children, love is our essence. All that we give to others is given to ourselves. Therefore, true happiness results from loving, never judging, and always forgiving everyone.

Ed Petry
Dayton, Ohio

What took us so long?

I have never been as conscious as I am now about how divided our beloved Church of the Brethren has become over an issue like whether we should allow our gay and lesbian members to have a booth at Annual Conference to express their views on human sexuality. It is a relief for me to know that the previous policy of denying their request has been reversed. My first question would be: What in the world took us so long to make this decision for our brothers and sisters? Did it occur to us that stubborn pride was keeping us from showing compassionate love, especially to our young people who don't want to come out of the closet because they fear that revealing their orientation will result in you shunning them in the name of Jesus? It is not enough that we simply be polite and cheerful to those with whom we disagree. We might do well to pay attention to the dark but appropriate imagery in Revelation that those who are luke-

Pontius' Puddle



ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

2012 TOURS

- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR STEVE LANDIS (April 25-May 4)
- HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 25-June 7)
- GLORY of RUSSIA: MOSCOW and ST. PETERSBURG (July 3-13)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
- LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
- TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
- MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
- SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
- MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October 12-24)
- SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
- VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
- MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

- AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
- CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
- PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
- MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)

- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
- MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
- LANDS of the BIBLE with PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28 - May 7)
- EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
- GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
- ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
- COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
- FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
- THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
- BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
- CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
- EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

2014 TOURS

- THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST and GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 9-19)
- JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (JANUARY 18-27)



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warm to the hot issues of the conflict between light and darkness will be "spewed out of God's mouth." Enough said, I think!

I suspect that the day will eventually be carried by our young people who will hear Brother Brian Flory's call to be courageous and finally vote at Conference to let the past be the past so we may go forward into the Kingdom of Christ's love so that we may together become who God intended us to be: friends and lovers in His name.

Edward Huber
Philadelphia, Pa.

Conference exhibit booth provides validation

Let me see if I understand this correctly. The delegates at Annual Conference (AC) in Grand Rapids affirmed the 1983 AC statement on human sexuality—that the homosexual lifestyle is unacceptable. In addition, the 2002 AC statement rejected a proposal to

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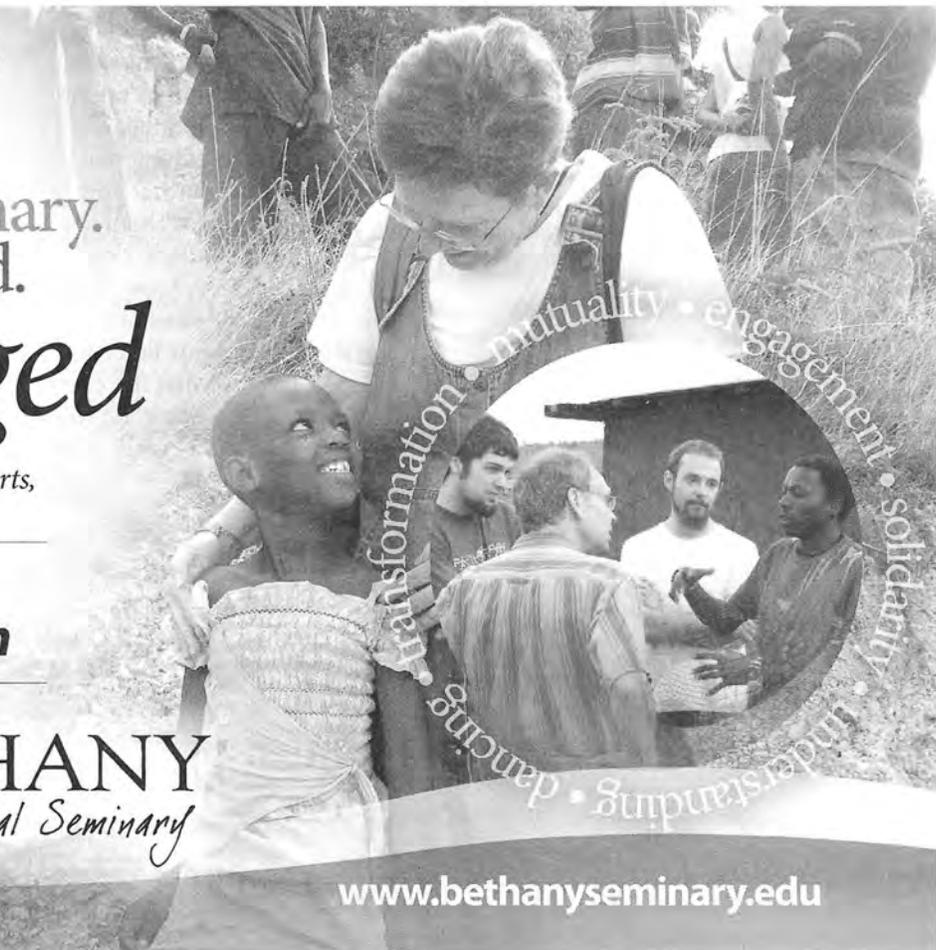
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license and ordain persons of homosexual orientation, stating “we understand . . . homosexual practice is unacceptable behavior in the church and therefore implied to be sin.” That’s exactly what the Bible says about the homosexual lifestyle—it is sin. It is abominable (Leviticus 18:22 – KJV) and “godlessness and wickedness” (Romans 1:18ff – NIV). Yet, despite two strong AC statements and clear biblical admonition, the Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC) has granted an exhibit booth to the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests (BMC) for Annual Conference in St. Louis this summer. This action flies in the face of AC statements and biblical understanding.

Look at it this way—would it be right if P&AC would have approved an exhibit booth in 1971 for the Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) or military recruiters following the 1970 AC statement that “all war is sin”? Would it be right for P&AC to grant an exhibit booth in 1985 to the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) following the 1984 statement that the Church of the Brethren “opposes abortion because the rejection of unborn children violates the love of God”? These are not radical comparisons; they are, in my

The opinions expressed in “Letters” are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.

Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

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PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH of the Brethren, Windsor, Colorado, is seeking part-time, bi-vocational leadership. The small forty year old congregation is working to enhance current lay leadership and build new community ministries through the addition of a pastor/ministry coordinator position. Located in the heart of the desirable and dynamic front range of the Rocky Mountains, Windsor is ripe for growing ministries rich in witness for peace, justice, and healing. Professional opportunities abound. Send inquiries to: windsorcob@lpbroadband.net.

opinion, true illustrations of what P&AC just authorized.

Having been involved in the workings of the P&AC for a number of years, I know that the rationalization to grant an exhibit space, for some, is further conversation. Is further conversation led by BMC, the promoting organization of the homosexual agenda, appropriate? If further conversation was needed, a neutral party like On Earth Peace should facilitate the conversation, possibly in their exhibit booth. In the comparisons I cited, would further conversation led by military recruiters or abortion doctors in those years have been appropriate?

The denomination has been discussing the subject of human sexuality for the past 30 years. The denomination discussed all of this intensely during the Special Response Process in the two-year period leading up to AC in Grand Rapids last year. Those who believe the Bible to be God’s Word on the matter probably aren’t going to change their position. Those who hold a progressive world view of the matter probably aren’t going to change their position. So, what will the exhibit booth for BMC achieve? Here’s the sad answer—validation for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender persons. I thought the homosexual lifestyle was unacceptable, even sinful. BMC’s presence in the exhibit hall will be advocacy disguised as further conversation.

P&AC has said, “There are no plans to revisit any of the decisions regarding the exhibit hall.” They have made their decision and nothing will change it. The door validating the homosexual lifestyle has been opened despite what the church recently discerned in the Spirit. So much for the weight of AC statements or God’s Word.

Lerry W. Fogle
Frederick, Md.

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 206; jclements@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

- Bakersfield, Calif.:** Nicole Matthias, Jayden Isaacs-Crawford
- Berkey, Windber, Pa.:** Jarod Feathers, Bob Fisher, Becky Fisher, Tina Harclerode, Dave Harclerode, Jaymie Harclerode, Brielle Antesberger, Austin Bates, Ethan Birth, Daniela Crissman, Jeanna Harclerode, Angela Helbig, Elizabeth McClemens, Cathy Paul, Harry Paul, Gavin Pierce, Hannah Vogel, Mary Wagner
- Big Creek, Cushing, Okla.:** Donald Patterson, Jr.
- Cedar Lake, Auburn, Ind.:** DeMaris Jordan, Ashley Freels
- Chiques, Manheim, Pa.:** Gordon Miller, Arthur Hostetter, Heather Hostetter
- Easton, Md.:** Diane Shores
- Elizabethtown, Pa.:** Amy Carroll, Richard Carroll, Nancy Gerber, Bob Jacobs, Keelyan Sheeley
- Glendale, Calif.:** Christine Jackson, Jennifer Pierce, Julia Park, Cindy Slaughter
- Hanover, Pa.:** Andrew McDonald
- Harness Run, Burlington, W.Va.:** Sharon Smith
- Harrisburg, First, Harrisburg, Pa.:** Roger Cooley, Sharon Smith, Sierra Dixon, Devin Dixon
- Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio:** Brennan Kunkel, Lily Kunkel, Skye Kunkel, Lauren Beattie
- Meadow Branch, Westminster, Md.:** S. Faye Miller, Rachel Nusbaum, Tara Nusbaum, Duane Early, Rich Bosworth, Stephanie Baker
- Myerstown, Pa.:** Wilbur Keppley, Gloria Keppley, Carl Kline, Allison Kline, Debra Tucker, Christine Blackwell, Kelly Reist, Scott Reazer
- Myersville, Md.:** David Fogle, Patti Fogle, Robin Loy, Glenda Rothrock, Thomas Rothrock
- Ninth Street, Roanoke, Va.:** Madelyn Montgomery, Hannah Quinn, Betsy St. John
- Oakton, Vienna, Va.:** John MacKinnon, Colleen Eddy, John Eddy, Russell Ahalt, Sarah Beth Seidel
- Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.:** Bev Braniff, Wanda Johnson, Morgan Dee Eggleston, Kathy Wise, Wayne Ayers, Marilyn Ayers, Bud Ayers, Jane Harris, Helen Gillis, Ben Leslie, Diane

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Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind.:

Sean Engel, Dana Engel, John Kintz, Leslie Kintz, Jon Zurcher, Mindy Zurcher, Candy Teboe, Larry Atkinson, Brian Wendel, Anita Wendel, Carter Michael, Cobe Michael, Nicole Moser, Taylor Moser, Austin Walden, Ashley Taylor, Dakota Roudebush, Bill Gay, Penny Gay, Thomas Liby, Emily Myers

Salem, Englewood, Ohio:

Jennah Hughes, Isabell Satterthwaite, Jasmine Satterthwaite, Robert Shiverdecker, Nicole Seibel, Samantha Seibel, Dominic Stratton, Kinsey Swafford, Logan Swafford

Saunders Grove, Moneta, Va.:

Nicholas Williams, McKenzie Williams, Tori Thurman, Cody Rockwell, Luke Wyatt

Thurmont, Md.: Madelyn

Leach, Taylor Lowe, Rachel Miller

University Baptist and

Brethren, State College, Pa.: Bonnie Burggraf, Paul Carswell, Rebekah Helsel Carswell, Carrie Fala, Erica Frankenburg, Mark Kissling, Art Leach, Sophie Penney, Fran MacEachren, Jan Perison, Jean Yeatman

White Hill, Stuarts Draft, Va.:

Sharon Hale, Robert Cash, Edith Cole, Tracey Cash, Shane Mason, Eric Cowherd, Mary Cowherd, Danny Wade, Karen Wade

Anniversaries

Anderson, Charles and Wilma,

North Manchester, Ind., 65

Barkman, John and Guila,

Everett, Pa., 73

Bennington, John and Sandy,

Harrisonburg, Va., 50

Berg, Clarence and Marg,

Hanover, Pa., 65

Boose, Raymond R. and Mary

E., Martinsburg, Pa., 65

Campbell, Warren and Ida

Mae, Edwards, Mo., 60

Creps, Bill and Beverly,

Bedford, Pa., 50

Crowther, Ted and Vivian,

Ephrata, Pa., 65

Gass, Harold and Lyllis,

Hartville, Mo., 50

Hunter, Richard and Eleanor,

Phoenixville, Pa., 55

Kesler, Roland and Valetta,

Quinter, Kan., 60

Ludwick, William B. and Mary

C., Fairfax, Va., 55

Mellinger, Don and Charlotte,

Ephrata, Pa., 65

Sheaffer, Paul and Anna,

Hummelstown, Pa., 65

Sprekel, Marvin and Willetta,

Quinter, Kan., 70

Deaths

Abell, Francis Carroll, 77, New

Windsor, Md., Dec. 10

Bane, Velma Virginia, 95,

Burlington, W.Va., Aug. 23

Barnhart, Dorothy Elizabeth,

86, Rocky Mount, Va.,

Jan. 15

Bigler, Joanne N., 80,

Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 26

Bishop, Tiana, 12, Defiance,

Ohio, Nov. 21

Bowman, Gregory G., 56,

Peoria, Ariz., Dec. 3

Bryant, James M., 74,

Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 11

Butterbaugh, Edgar C., 83,

North Manchester, Ind.,

April 12, 2011

Carlisle, James Caylor, 88,

New Windsor, Md., Feb. 6

Clark, James D., 78, Peoria

Heights, Ill., Jan. 26

Craig, Esther O., 95, South

Bend, Ind., Feb. 12

Davis, Phyllis, 76, Trappe,

Md., Sept. 17

Deaven, Florence B., 88,

Hershey, Pa., Feb. 8

Dickensheets, Edgar

Frederick, 85, New

Windsor, Md., Oct. 3

Dulin, Kathleen Ray, 89,

Federalburg, Md., June 12

Dull, Olive Leppo, 97,

Westminster, Md., Feb. 3

Edwards, Sara, 87, Franklin,

Pa., June 13

Ensminger, Esther C., 91,

Palmyra, Pa., Sept. 9

Facen, Michelle, 58, Dayton,

Ohio, Jan. 9

Fahnstock, James H., 92,

Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 15

Farver, Evelyn Fuller, 86,

Mount Airy, Md., June 30

Fedele, Joseph R., 83, West

Chester, Pa., Nov. 5

Fiore, Donald, 83,

Greensburg, Pa., Nov. 23

Firebaugh, Richard Colgate,

79, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 30

Fleming, Violet Grace, 83,

Broadway, Va., Oct. 15

Freeman, Helen Mae, 93,

South Bend, Ind., Aug. 2

Fritz, Lewis P., 78,

Chambersburg, Pa., Feb. 11

Gardner, Patricia A., 59,

Walkerton, Ind., Feb. 21,

2011

Gensinger, Michael L., 34,

Walkerton, Ind., Jan. 24,

2011

Gibson, Ivan Donald, 95,

South English, Iowa, Dec.

12

Gillis, Helen A., 95, Lakeville,

Ind., Jan. 3

Greenhawk, George N., 72,

Cordova, Md., June 3

Griffith, David A., 76, Everett,

Pa., Feb. 2

Grossnickle, Arthur Glen, 84,

Frederick, Md., July 5

Hamilton, Sarah A., 92,

Everett, Pa., Feb. 10

Harbaugh, Melba I., 83,

Waterloo, Iowa, Jan. 25

Hayes, Lois Gertrude, 100,

McPherson, Kan., Jan. 20

Heatwole, John Paul, 87,

Fishersville, Va., Jan. 31

Heckman, Janet Marie, 70,

New Oxford, Pa., Dec. 19

Hedge, Robert W., 71,

Roanoke, Va., June 17

Hershey, Naomi L., 70,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 8

Hossler, Nancy Elizabeth, 84,

Manheim, Pa., Sept. 13

Howell, Weldon Gene, 94,

McPherson, Kan., Jan. 3

Jackson, Maxine Jarrell, 72,

Pratts, Va., July 23

Johnson, Helen L., 98,

Bremen, Ind., July 22

Jones, Sharron C., 72,

Plymouth, Ind., Dec. 2

Kerr, Homer S., 101, South

English, Iowa, Dec. 21

Kindy, Dean R., 90, North

Manchester, Ind., Jan. 27

Krug, Lyle, 94, La Verne,

Calif., Dec. 13

Landis, Helen M., 88, Lititz,

Pa., Jan. 17

Lightner, Robert L., 82,

Rheems, Pa., Oct. 31

Long, Virginia, 89, Vienna,

Va., Dec. 13

Lybarger, Betty L., 81,

Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 17

Masonheimer, James R., 85,

Mechanicsburg, Pa., Feb. 2

McAfee, Mae E., 90, New

Oxford, Pa., Jan. 1

McConahy, Betty L., 84,

Bedford, Pa., Dec. 28

Mickey, Ralph L., 89,

Greensburg, Pa., Jan. 25

Myers, Ethel Virginia, 89,

Falls Church, Va., Nov. 15

Poage, Dorothy Troutt, 96,

Vinton, Va., Dec. 9

Rathke, Frances Doyle, 76,

Columbia, Mo., Jan. 28

Ritchey, Paul Edward, Sr., 83,

New Oxford, Pa., Feb. 4

Rohrer, James Vernon, 83,

Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 29

Roop, Talitha Ann, 82, New

Windsor, Md., Sept. 29

Schackow, Phillip, 63,

Defiance, Ohio, Nov. 27

Sellers, Ruth E., 87,

Thompsontown, Pa., Dec. 23

Sharpes, Iris Coffman, 84,

Boonsboro, Md., Feb. 13

Simmons, Carrie Evelyn, 94,

Bridgewater, Va., May 25,

2011

Stepp, James Owen, 75,

Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 25

Sullivan, David, 95, Hanover,

Pa., Jan. 12

Swartz, Verdane T., 50,

Greensburg, Pa., Nov. 4

Tannreuther, Robert, 87,

Waterloo, Iowa, Jan. 22

Truban, Norma Lorraine, 88,

Cordova, Md., Jan. 12

Tucker, Helen K., 88,

Freeport, Ill., Jan. 29

Wagner, Doris, 89, Palmyra,

Pa., Jan. 1

Walker, Twila, 88,

Greensburg, Pa., June 3

Walter, Chester Elmer, 83,

Bremen, Ind., Nov. 21

Warner, James Richard, 75,

Covington, Ohio, Jan. 30

Weaver, Robert, 81,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 22

Welch, Donald Hartley, 87,

Somerset, Pa., Jan. 20

Wentz, Dwayne Irvin, 71,

Somerset, Pa., Dec. 3

Wolfgang, Millard H., Jr., 92,

New Oxford, Pa., Sept. 20

Wolfgang, Ruth Hershey, 91,

New Oxford, Pa., Dec. 31

Wood, Bertha Magdalene, 92,

Shelcta, Pa., Dec. 29

Wright, Elizabeth Susan, 100,

Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 18

Yeatman, Howard R., Jr., 66,

Cambridge, Md., Oct. 15

Licensings

Aponte, Caridad, Atl. NE Dist.

(Puerta del Cielo, Reading,

Pa.), Jan. 8

Diaz, Sagrario E., Atl. NE

Dist. (Puerta del Cielo,

Reading, Pa.), Jan. 8

Hollenberg-Duffey, Audrey,

Mid-Atl. Dist. (Westminster,

Md.), Dec. 11

Ordinations

Beekley, Charles G., Mid-Atl.

Dist. (Bush Creek,

Monrovia, Md.), May 22

Chappell, David, Shen. Dist.

(White Hill, Stuarts Draft,

Va.), Nov. 6

Godfrey, Patrick, Shen. Dist.

(Cedar Grove, Brandywine,

W.Va.), Dec. 18

Gresh, Gieta H., Mid-Atl.

Dist. (Community of Joy,

Salisbury, Md.), Sept. 11

Mishler, Cheryl Jean, W.

Plains Dist. (Topeka, Kan.),

Nov. 20

Morris, J. Edward, Shen. Dist.

(Madison, Brightwood,

Va.), Dec. 3

Stein, Robert R., W. Pa. Dist.

(Uniontown, Pa.), Nov. 13

Torres, Gloria Rosario, Atl.

NE Dist. (Puerta del Cielo,

Reading, Pa.), Dec. 18

<

Playing in harmony

There is a certain way that Noel Paul Stookey's fingers strum the nylon strings of his classical guitar that I've always found intriguing. When he plays, it is almost as if he is flinging something unwanted from his fingertips, flinging it over and over in hopes that it will fly off and he will be rid of it.

But it wasn't just the way he played, it was the sound of his guitar—that warm, rich tone classical guitars produce—and, of course, the music itself: the harmony that the strings produced, along with the great folk music that Peter, Paul, and Mary sang.



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER Editor

It seems as if Peter, Paul, and Mary have been around forever—or at least since Ike was in the White House.

Actually, Peter, Paul, and Mary—Peter and Paul, with those dashing goatees; Mary, with her flaxen locks, which she tossed purposefully every two bars whenever she sang—came into our national consciousness just after Ike, in the early '60s, with JFK, Bob Dylan, and the Civil Rights Movement. I was just a kid then. Our TV exploded when our house burned down in 1959 and we didn't replace it, so we didn't see Elvis, the Beatles, JFK's inauguration nor his funeral, or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech or, therefore, Peter, Paul, and Mary performing folk songs at that historic event.

about performing retreads of "Blowin' in the Wind" and "If I Had a Hammer." When we saw them at the Greek, the United States was aiding government forces in Central America who were decimating segments of their own populations. And when Noel Paul Stookey sang "El Salvador," I felt my heart rip and my eyes flood, and I knew that PP&M were as relevant as they had ever been.

A few weeks ago, when I got to shake the hand that Noel Paul Stookey flings across those nylon strings, I realized that even today—some 50 years after PP&M began prodding our collective conscience—he is *still* as relevant as ever. Mary's death in September 2009 marked the end of an era in folk music. But Noel and Peter are still singing, and they are still insightful observers of the forces at work in society.

These days, Noel (the name he now prefers to go by) and Elizabeth, his wife of 48 years, present a music and spoken-word performance called "One Light, Many Candles." Its purpose is to remind us that, although we may come from different faith traditions—Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, Protestant—we can, and must, find ways to recognize and respect the common good in each of our traditions.

Watching Noel and Elizabeth present their message recently made me think that, in light of the tensions in our own denomination these past few years, we Brethren might learn a thing or two from what they are saying.

Even Noel's guitar playing seems to speak to the importance of appreciating the richness that diversity brings. The

EACH STRING IS DIFFERENT ... BUT WHEN THOSE STRINGS ARE PLAYED TOGETHER—WITH THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND—THE RESULT IS HARMONY. IN FACT, IT IS ONLY **BECAUSE THOSE STRINGS ARE DIFFERENT THAT THERE IS HARMONY.**

But I did see Peter, Paul, and Mary perform at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles two decades later. Friends had invited my wife and me to see them. I grudgingly agreed because we liked these people and wanted to socialize with them. But really—Peter, Paul, and Mary, in 1983? Were they still performing? I figured this was going to be like a sixth-grade museum field trip—trot out the desiccated relics of a bygone era for aging boomers.

Boy, was I wrong.

Peter, Paul, and Mary had not lost their keen take on society's pulse or an ounce of their vigor. This was not a concert

strings of his guitar sing out with every urgent strum. Each string is a different width and, in most cases, each is tuned to a different note. (If they were all the same, the music would sound pretty monotonous.) But when those strings are played together—with the touch of the master's hand—the result is harmony. In fact, it is only *because* those strings are different that there is harmony.

When the Master's fingers strum across us and we feel ourselves vibrating as one with the life of the Holy Spirit, beautiful harmony can occur. Maybe we just need another lesson in how to play together. **W**

COMING IN MAY: Tim Harvey reflects on his year as moderator and looks ahead to Annual Conference, looking backwards in order to look forward toward racial harmony, lessons learned from Abraham Harley Cassel, Bible study, media review, reflections, letters, and more.



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