

Church of the Brethren

# MESSENGER

MAY 2012 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

5-DEC-1960  
FREEDOM RIDERS ATTACKED IN ALABAMA  
WHILE TESTING COMPLIANCE WITH THE  
DESEGREGATION LAWS

1-FEB-1960  
BLACK STUDENTS STAGED SIT-IN AT  
ONLY LUNCH COUNTER GREENBOURNE

24-SEP-1957  
CONGRESS PASSES CIVIL RIGHTS ACT  
SINCE RECONSTRUCTION

52-APR-1959  
MACK CHARLES RIVER TRAVELERS  
AND LYNCHED FORBID TO USE BUS

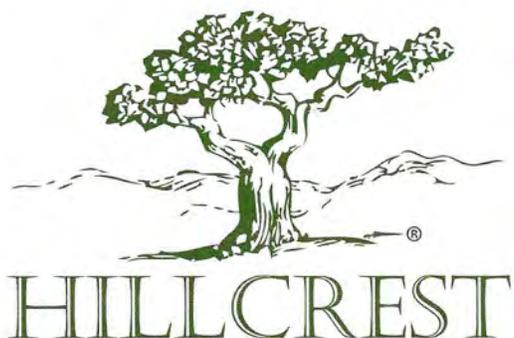
29-AUG-1957  
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER ORDER  
FEDERAL TROOP TO MONITOR  
DESEGREGATION AT LITTLE ROCK

19-APR-1957  
SUPREME COURT OUTLAWED SEGREGATION  
IN BUS TERMINALS

Looking backward to **MOVE FORWARD**

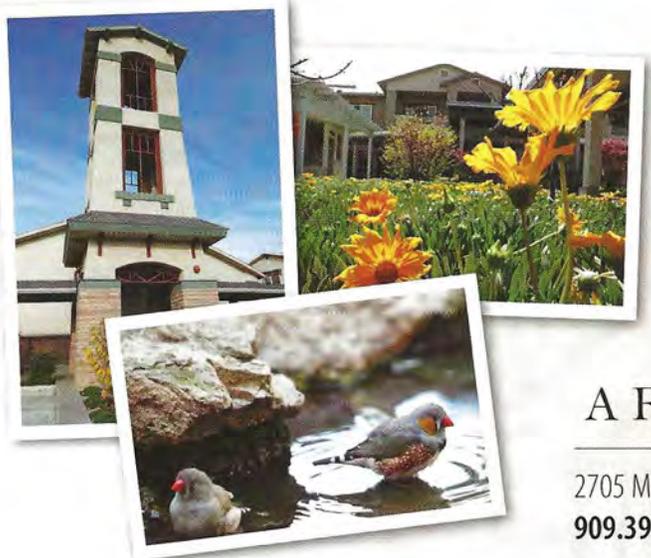


# Love Your Life



## A Remarkable Brethren Community

- In following our Brethren roots of Peacefully, Simply, Together
- On-site full-time Chaplain, vesper services
- Three Brethren churches within 5 miles of Hillcrest
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- Community Gardens
- Great location, campus and weather
- Hillcrest offers all levels of care. You will be welcomed with open arms and enjoy the love and comfort of lifelong friends!



## Remarkable Residents



### { Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }

Jerry and Berkley Davis are very involved at Hillcrest, participating in several aspects of campus life. Jerry heads up Channel 3, the community's in-house television station, while Berkley serves on the management team of the Hillcrest gift shop and assists with the production of "Hillcrest Happenings," the community's resident newsletter. "There is more to do and learn here than one can imagine," says Jerry. "I think we made a good choice in Hillcrest!"



### { Resident Shantilal Bhagat }

"Hillcrest, a model community for retirement: orderly not chaotic, unambiguously secure living with caring residents, friendly responsive associates and staff, top-rated physical facilities for swimming, exercising, dining, nursing and healthcare. You are in experienced hands at Hillcrest, why go anywhere else?"



### { Chaplain Tom Hostetler }

"Hillcrest... what a great place to live and work! As chaplain, I am privileged to participate in the spiritual life of many of the residents and the community as a whole. Opportunities abound for worship at all levels of care; bible studies, phone devotions, sharing and inspiration to meet a variety of needs and expectations. The care for neighbors, the interaction and activity of residents, the desire to learn and grow, and the beautiful facilities and surroundings all work together to make Hillcrest a remarkable place. Come and see!"

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“... publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Psa. 26:7b KJV).

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

Editor: Randy Miller Publisher: Wendy McFadden News: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: The Concept Mill



Karen Halberg

**ONTHECOVER** With a commitment to become more multiracial, the Evangelical Covenant Church began a journey several years ago. The church's top leadership climbed onto a bus—African Americans paired with non-African Americans—and traveled together to civil rights sites across the South. On the cover, participants linger at the somber Civil Rights Memorial at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery. Cover photo by Wendy McFadden.

## 8 Looking backward to move forward

They boarded a bus—fitting, somehow—and traveled to a handful of locations whose names evoke critical moments during the Civil Rights Movement: Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma. Paired black with white (or sometimes Asian, Lakota, or Latina), travelers embarked on a journey not only to physical locations that were pivotal in America's turbulent struggle for equality, but also to places within themselves that only a journey like this could take them. In our cover feature, Wendy McFadden shares her own experiences from a journey to the South with the Evangelical Covenant Church.

## 12 All I really need to know I learned from Abraham Harley Cassel

His illiterate father was adamantly opposed to reading and education. But, lucky for the Church of the Brethren, that didn't stop Abraham Harley Cassel from cracking a book every chance he got. In time, he accumulated some 50,000 books, manuscripts, private letters, pamphlets, and documents, without which much of our understanding of who the Brethren were in the 18th and 19th centuries would have been considerably poorer. Much of the Cassel collection was housed at Bethany Seminary when Frank Rameriz was a young student there, and when he wasn't writing term papers, he was pouring over Cassel's immense collection.

## 16 A holy waste

How do we read the Bible? Is it where we look for answers? Is it what we turn for confirmation of our assumptions? Do we ever put ourselves into the story, as if we were a disciple walking alongside Jesus some 2,000 years ago? Ken Gibble has tried to do that from time to time and discovered some surprises—"and not always pleasant ones," he confesses. It requires courage, but he contends it is worth the effort.

## 18 Where has the Spirit gone?

Robert's Rules of Order may have their place. But at one time, decisions at Annual Conference were achieved by consensus, Joshua Brockway reminds us. Has something been lost in our desire for expediency? While we may never return to those days of consensus, Brockway asks us to ponder: "What would it look like for the church to take the long view of discernment and submission to the Holy Spirit?"

## 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

**E**rasure is a form of poetry in which words in an existing work are erased until eventually the remaining words create a new piece. The poet starts with any words—words as ordinary as the daily newspaper or as lofty as *Paradise Lost*.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

The resulting poem can be unrelated to the source, or it can interact with the original text. The words of the new work can be arranged into lines or stanzas, but stay in the same order as the original words.

The word “erasure” reminds me of a T-shirt worn one day by the leader of the Sankofa Journey chronicled in this month’s cover story. Printed on her shirt was the word “Eracism.” Inspired by that, I offer an erasure poem created out of that article.

In this particular case, the prose and the poetry do interact. Consider this page the coda for the article.

**Eracism**

Roughly  
 this is the idea  
 I have longed  
 to truly hear  
 in pairs we sat  
 with different eyes  
 stories  
 life  
 a meditative place  
 of stone and water  
 bloody  
 in between  
 a great multitude  
 touching the names spilling across the surface  
 to think  
 every day  
 if not this, then another  
 moved  
 moving  
 the soul  
 together.

*Wendy McFadden*

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# COBYS has a ball

COBYS supporters "had a ball" at the Middle Creek Church of the Brethren on March 15 - a fancy one at that! More than 400 people attended "The COBYS Fancy Ball" and donated just over \$34,000 to date, setting new records for both attendance and giving at a COBYS informational/fundraising banquet. (Previous bests were 386 and \$33,781, respectively.)

The theme of the main presentation at the mock gala event, appropriately enough, was "Looking Good." Clad in their tuxedos, executive director Mark Cunningham and director of development Don Fitzkee discussed aspects of COBYS ministries that are looking good (with occasional distractions from Don, who found a tux to be less than comfortable) and introduced several presenters.

On the program were two judges: Magisterial District Judge Rodney Hartman, who testified to the effectiveness of COBYS anti-truancy programs, and Judge Jay Hoberg, who offered reflections from his perspective as custodian of Lancaster County's Orphans Court.

Ryan and Erica Onufer introduced the four children they adopted through COBYS last fall and shared how God called them to care for kids. Finally, foster parents Matt and Marie Cooper and biological parents Frank and Katie, and Bianca told of the special bonds that have built through the love they share for children Aliza and Zameer.

Providing music was a quartet composed of members of the Susquehanna Chorale, including COBYS controller Cynthia Umberger, alto; Brethren Village pastor Mark Tedford, tenor; Sara Zentmeyer, soprano; and Stephen Schaefer, bass. The evening concluded with a slide show of COBYS faces and events from the previous year.



**Left:** COBYS director of development Don Fitzkee and executive director Mark Cunningham dressed to the nines for COBYS Fancy Ball fundraiser at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren. **Below:** The 407 people at the event ball set an attendance record for the fundraising banquet.



*COBYS Family Services is a Christian agency, affiliated with the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren. Founded in 1979 as a teen foster care program, it originally was named Church of the Brethren Youth Services (COBYS). Over more than a quarter century of service, it has grown into a comprehensive family ministry that now includes adoption and foster care services, counseling, family life education, and a permanency program.*



## YOU SAID IT

**"We must take seriously the call to embrace all cultures. No one culture has all that it needs to appreciate the beauty of God and God's world."**

—Nathan Hosler, advocacy officer and ecumenical peace coordinator for Church of the Brethren and National Council of Churches, in an April 5 Action Alert statement on racism.

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 28

Percentage of American adults who have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion or no religion at all, according to a recently released Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study.



*Members of the Venice (Fla.) Community Church of the Brethren gather for the dedication of a peace pole on their property.*

## Emphasizing our peace stance in Florida

### Venice church dedicates peace pole

The Venice Community Church of the Brethren recently planted a peace pole in front of its church building in Venice, Fla. Although the church building is a rented storefront on a major downtown street, it has an attractive garden in the front of the building. The congregation believed that planting a peace pole in such a location would express clearly that the church serves as a beacon of peace and constancy to all in a busy world.

"The pole is visible from the heavily traveled street and from several commercial buildings nearby," said pastor Janice Shull. "We hope that everyone who passes by will be inspired to look for creative ways to build peace wherever they travel." "May Peace Prevail on Earth" is printed on the pole in eight languages:

English, Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish, German, Chinese, Creole, and Seminole. The peace pole was dedicated on Palm Sunday in memory of Rose Marie Lange, a member of the congregation who died in 2009.

### A traveling mural for peace

The Action for Peace Team of the Atlantic Southeastern District was looking for a new approach to calling attention to peace. In the past, the team had

*Yvonne Schwartz (near right) sews the mural. At far right, Dawn Ziegler, Louise Bohrer, Jean Hollenburg of Sebring Church of the Brethren help paint the mural.*



passed out literature to raise funds for church plantings, and they were looking for something different to spark interest in the churches historical peace stance.

The newest member of the team, Yvonne Schwartz, suggested a "community mural project," as she had been involved in one while in Colorado in 2008-2009 and studying under Renick Stevenson, a professional mural artist for Grief & Creativity workshops. Merle Crouse, of St. Cloud, Fla., suggested making it a traveling mural so all the churches in the district might enjoy and use the mural.

The mural evolved as Renick Stevenson presented the base design, and Yvonne added the faces on the bottom right while sewing the mural pockets for hanging. The design was outlined in thick black permanent marker so the participant artist could visualize the concept. After the painting was completed with acrylic paints, the mural was again outlined with permanent marker.

The mural is currently hanging in the narthex at the Sebring (Fla.) Church of the Brethren. The painting process was enjoyed by many with great fellowship and food at the Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla. The Atlantic Southeast Brethren churches represented at Venture Fun(d) included Miami First, A Life in Christ, Cape Coral, Venice, Arcadia, Good Shepherd, Bradenton, St. Petersburg, Sebring, Lorida, New Covenant (Orlando), Winter Park (Orlando), Ferncreek Community (Orlando) and Jacksonville. At least 25 people helped with the mural at the camp or at the Sebring church, where it was completed.

## REMEMBERED

Southern Ohio District has made a special request for prayer following the sudden death of youth pastor **Brian Delk** of Castine Church of the Brethren in Arcanum, Ohio. He died the morning of April 3. "The youth pastor at our Castine congregation was killed in a car accident," said the district e-mail. "Please be in prayer for Brian's wife, Cindi, and the rest of his family as well as the Castine church, especially their youth group."

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



## Mount Morris Brethren assist in Elgin

Volunteers from Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren gathered at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., this spring to assemble the May Source mailing. Source is a packet of flyers, brochures, newsletters, and other information and resources that is mailed to each congregation on a monthly basis. Jean Clements (third from left), an employee at Brethren Press, organizes the Source mailings and hosts the volunteer groups that help put it together.

## The lay of the land in Modesto

The Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren recently completed an eight-week Sunday school series called "The Lay of the Land." The purpose of the class was to provide education about issues of conflict in the denomination, and to consider options for resolution in the congregation and the broader church. The series focused on involvement of LGBT members in churches and in the denomination; the role of women in leadership; and biblical interpretation and authority.

Four denominational leaders took part in the series. Don Booz, executive minister of the Pacific Southwest District, spoke in person, as did Ruthann Johansen, president of Bethany Theological Seminary. Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger and Annual Conference moderator Tim Harvey spoke via Skype.

"We would recommend this technology (Skype) to other churches as a way of enhancing their programs and saving time and money," said Felton Daniels, coordinator of the series for the Modesto church. "This concept opens the door for all kinds of connections with others both near and far."

At the end of the series the group came up with a number of issues to consider as a congregation: Is it time to consider becoming an Open and Affirming congregation? How can the church help persons on different sides of issues come together to talk?

"We want to be open to all viewpoints," Daniels said. "We want to affirm other congregations' ministries. How do we witness our peace stance to our local community and to the denomination? We need to encourage our youth to consider the ministry and attend Bethany. We need to be clearer about what it means to be Brethren. These are points we will ponder and work on."

"We hope telling our story about our experience with this series will help others take a look at the issues in a different light," Daniels said, "and to use program-enhancing technology in ways they never thought about before."

# The Church of the Brethren: a friend of sinners?

*"...the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Matthew 11:19)*

I grew up hearing the word *reputation* used primarily in the negative sense. In high school, some people were known to have a "reputation." In such settings, the context was always negative and I knew what was being said: Stay away.

Jesus clearly wasn't as concerned with his public reputation as I was raised to be. Jesus was often found hanging out with the "wrong kinds" of people: political revolutionaries and Roman collaborators. Tax collectors. Prostitutes. Lepers. Once, a woman showed up uninvited to dinner and cried on Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. Apparently Jesus went to so many parties that he earned the reputation mentioned in the scripture passage above.



TIM HARVEY

Clearly, Jesus sought people out. And yet, Jesus loved persons like these so much that they actually *wanted* to be near him. Whether Jesus invited himself over to their

home for dinner (Luke 19) or was compassionate toward someone who was unceremoniously plopped down in his presence (John 8), Jesus demonstrated that he truly was a "friend of sinners." Maybe Jesus' reputation came not

In the last three years, we've spent quite a bit of time and energy arguing about human sexuality. I don't regret the effort, because the subject is close to us in many ways. What I do lament, however, is how little energy we've given to talking about other things. I long for the day when Annual Conference is a place where we praise God that our congregations have "bad reputations" because we are so effectively sharing the gospel with those our culture deems "unacceptable." Imagine the joy in heaven when "Continuing the work of Jesus" actually costs us something. Imagine how pleased God will be when the prophecy of Zechariah 8:23 becomes true in our congregations: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

We have some work to do. We need to get to it.

My congregation actively participates in an ecumenical outreach called "Congregations in Action." We provide volunteers and weekend food at an elementary school a few blocks from our church. It's a great ministry, but from time to time people wonder if this really is a place the church should be serving. A few stories remind us why we are there.

Early in our involvement the school principal came to our meeting with a story. She told of talking with a child who had missed a week of school. When she asked the child why she hadn't been in school, the child responded, "Because Daddy threw me down the stairs again." (And yes, she did say "again.") That's our world, brothers and sisters. A world in which lots of people are thrown down all kinds of stairs.

**CONTINUING THE WORK OF JESUS MEANS WALKING WITH ALL KINDS OF PERSONS ALONG THE PATH FROM BROKENNESS AND SIN TO FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION. THAT'S NOT AN EASY ROAD. BUT IT IS THE WAY OF JESUS.**

because he spent so much time with sinners, but because sinners wanted to spend so much time with him.

These kinds of stories make for excellent preaching, until those persons are sitting in the pews with us. Then we're not so sure. We might wonder, "What would people say if they knew that was happening in our church?" Indeed.

Just as I was taught to use the word "reputation" in the negative sense, we Brethren might be guilty of using the phrase "Continuing the work of Jesus" only in the positive sense. There are countless examples of ways Brethren are reaching out, from disaster response to church planting to visiting prisoners. But what have we been doing lately that has earned us a reputation for being a denomination that is "friends with sinners"?

I don't know that anyone from our congregation ever met this child. But we've met others like her, both in the elementary school and lots of other places along the way. We don't need to go far to find people who are suffering. "Continuing the work of Jesus" means walking with all kinds of persons along the path from brokenness and sin to forgiveness and restoration. That's not an easy road. But it is the way of Jesus. And if it takes losing our good reputation to live the gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed with persons like that, I say "Bring it on." ❧

Tim Harvey is pastor of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., and moderator of the Church of the Brethren.

**“Heaven isn’t just a place you go—heaven is how you live your life.”**

—John Blanchard, executive pastor of Rock Church International in Virginia Beach, in the April 16 issue of *Time* magazine

“The church of Jesus Christ in the Western world is in terrible shape. Conservatives confuse certainty with faith. Liberals think knowledge alone is redemptive. We’ve got to come together.”

—Robin Meyers, author of *The Underground Church*, quoted by *The Birmingham News*

“He really did appear to hold that kindness is more important than conventional morality and the things we do more telling than merely the things we claim to believe.”

—British-born essayist and travel writer Pico Iyer, writing about the novelist Graham Greene, in his most recent book, *The Man Within My Head*

“The fact of Easter and the reality of what God is doing in the world require us to confront the opportunities and challenges of our age.”

—President Obama, in a video message April 10 to a conference of evangelical leaders in Washington, D.C.

“The Bible often asks readers to realize that their own well-being is directly related to that of others.”

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, from her devotional book, *A Community of Love*

“The logic of profitability works its magic in channelling the public funding of warfare and organized violence into universities, market-based service providers, and deregulated contractors. The metaphysics of war and associated forms of violence now creep into every aspect of American society.”

—Henry A., Giroux, in “Violence, USA: The Warfare State and the Brutalizing of Everyday Life,” *Truthout/Op-ed*

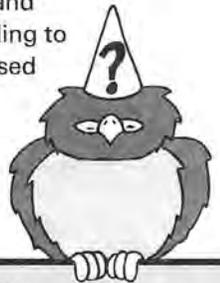
➔ **Michael Kinnamon, former National Council of Churches general secretary**, has accepted a three-year academic post at Seattle University. Kinnamon, who left the NCC last year for health reasons, will be the Spehar-Halligan Visiting Professor in Ecumenical Collaboration and Interreligious Dialogue at the university’s School of Theology and Religious Studies.

➔ **The number of missionaries sent from the US in 2010** numbered 127,000, according to *Christianity Today*. Brazil is the second-largest sending country overall. And South Korea is second-largest if only Protestants are counted. Some 32,400 missionaries were sent to the US in 2010. The US is the largest receiving country of missionaries in the world.

➔ **The internet and other communications technology** is having a marked impact on the effec-

tiveness of religious outreach these days, according to a survey released in March by FACT (Faith Communities of Today). In their survey of 11,077 of the 335,000 churches in the US, FACT found that seven in 10 congregations had websites, and four in 10 had Facebook pages by 2010.

➔ **Some 2.4 million people across the globe are victims of human trafficking** at any one time, and 80 percent of them are being exploited as sexual slaves, according to the United Nations. Yuri Fedotov, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, told a recent daylong General Assembly meeting on trafficking that 17 percent are trafficked to perform forced labor, including in homes and sweat shops. According to Fedotov’s Vienna-based office, only one out of 100 victims of trafficking is ever rescued.



**JUST FOR FUN: WORD FIND**

Pentecost **falls on May 27 this year**, marking the day of the coming of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word being heard in many languages (Acts 2). In the puzzle below, find these 14 modern languages. Words can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, backwards, or forwards.

CHINESE	FRENCH	GREEK	HAUSA	HINDI							
ENGLISH	GERMAN	GUJARATI	HEBREW	JAPANESE							
P	P	K	E	N	N	A	I	S	S	U	R
T	O	E	E	J	A	P	A	N	E	S	E
G	C	R	O	E	M	S	T	A	C	T	I
U	S	E	T	F	R	E	N	C	H	H	L
J	P	S	E	U	E	G	T	E	S	A	I
A	R	E	H	O	G	L	H	I	Y	U	H
R	S	N	P	I	R	U	L	I	I	S	A
A	T	I	W	E	A	G	E	R	N	A	W
T	E	H	S	I	N	A	P	S	N	D	S
I	O	C	H	E	B	R	E	W	E	K	I

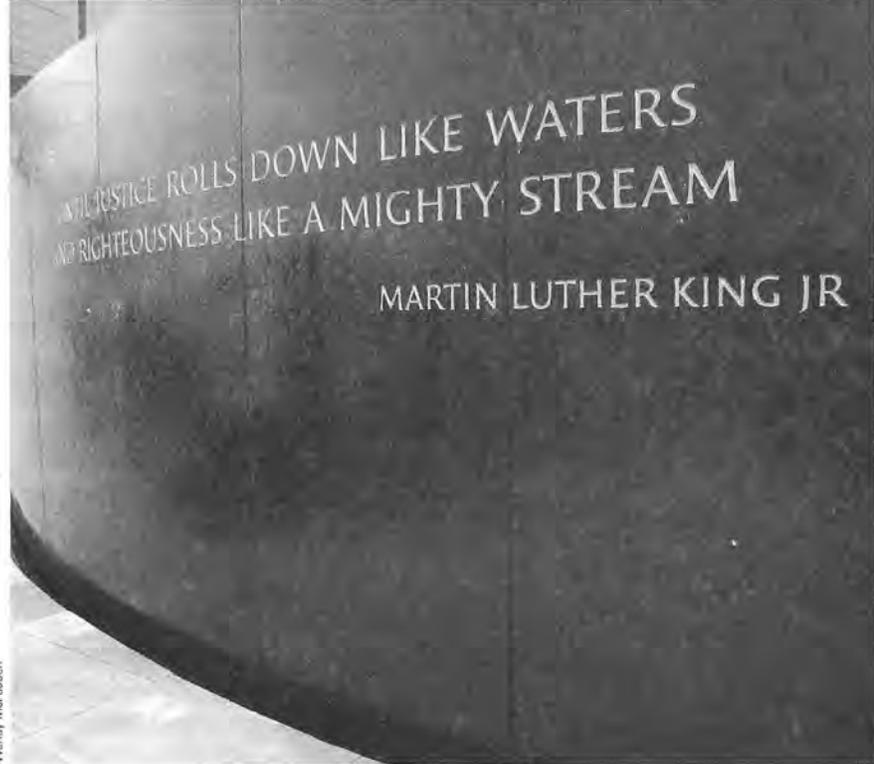


Looking  
backward  
to

# MOVE FORWARD

by Wendy McFadden

**"AFTER THIS I LOOKED, AND  
THERE WAS A GREAT  
MULTITUDE THAT NO ONE  
COULD COUNT, FROM EVERY  
NATION, FROM ALL TRIBES  
AND PEOPLES AND  
LANGUAGES, STANDING  
BEFORE THE THRONE AND  
BEFORE THE LAMB."  
—REVELATION 7:9**



**S**ankofa is a West African word that translates roughly as "looking backward to move forward."

The Sankofa symbol is a bird with its head turned backwards.

This is the idea behind the Sankofa Journey, part of the Evangelical Covenant Church's commitment to become more multiracial. It started more than a dozen years ago when the church's top leadership climbed onto a bus—African Americans paired with non-African Americans—and traveled together to civil rights sites across the South.

The bus trips have continued, and now the church sponsors two trips a year in its quest for "racial righteousness." The trips are primarily for Covenant members, but they're open to anyone who wants to participate. When I heard about the program I knew right away that I wanted to sign up, and I got my chance this past February.

The Sankofa Journey caught my imagination because I have—over the years—witnessed anti-racism workshops that did not go well. I have longed for a better way to make progress toward racial understanding.

I've also been a member of various groups that have talked about becoming more multiracial but have not succeeded. One of those groups is the Church of the Brethren.

And finally, I wanted to participate because I know that one of the most transforming forces can be to truly hear one another's stories—or, better yet, to become part of one another's stories.

For me, the Sankofa Journey was an opportunity to do this on two levels. It was an experience with a people. And it was an experience

with one person, the one who had been assigned to me as my partner for the weekend.

A Sankofa Journey is an immersion experience. There were 23 pairs of us on a bus from Friday evening to mid-day Monday. Two of those nights we slept on the bus. In each pair, one person was African American and the other was not. Of those who were not African American, three of us were Asian American, one was Latina, one was Lakota, and the rest were white. We ranged from college age to retirement age.

We spent almost every moment with our partners: In pairs we sat on the bus, walked through museums, discussed the assigned questions, shared hotel rooms, and stretched our legs at rest stops.

The first rest stop happened to be in a town named "Whiteland." Would I have paid any attention to the name on the highway sign if I hadn't been traveling with 23 black people? And what were the third-shift truckstop employees thinking when they saw this unusual mix of people stream in to wait while the bus refueled? Already I was seeing the world with different eyes.

By morning the bus had arrived at the Magic City Cafe in Birmingham, where we inhaled a big southern breakfast served by folks from the New City Church and learned about the congregation's downtown ministries. The next few hours were spent at the 16th Street Baptist Church, where we listened intently to the account of the four girls killed there in the 1963 bomb blast, and the Civil Rights Institute, where the stories come to life through image and word, sound and experience.

Surprisingly memorable was nearby Kelly Ingram Park, a



Joel Richfield

**ONE OF THE MOST TRANSFORMING FORCES CAN BE TO TRULY HEAR ONE ANOTHER'S STORIES—OR, BETTER YET, TO BECOME PART OF ONE ANOTHER'S STORIES. FOR ME, THE SANKOFA JOURNEY WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO THIS ON TWO LEVELS. IT WAS AN EXPERIENCE WITH A PEOPLE. AND IT WAS AN EXPERIENCE WITH ONE PERSON, THE ONE WHO HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO ME AS MY PARTNER FOR THE WEEKEND.**

central staging ground during the civil rights movement. Now the simple square is home to powerful sculptures depicting images from those days of struggle—a youth being attacked by a policeman and a dog, a boy and a girl behind prison bars, children huddled against a wall while being fire-hosed, a pathway where the pedestrian walks between walls of attack dogs. The sculptures remind us that many of the civil rights protesters were children.

From Birmingham we traveled to Montgomery to see the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Civil Rights Memorial, a meditative place of stone and water. Between Montgomery and Selma we walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, site of Bloody Sunday in 1965. In Jackson we stopped at the John Perkins Center.

In Memphis we toured the National Civil Rights Museum, located in the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, and worshiped at Mason Temple, site of his final message, the "mountaintop" sermon. We also visited Slave Haven, a house that was a stop on the Underground Railroad and now is maintained as a unique museum about slave history.

In between visits, our hours on the bus were spent studying videos about race and engaging in discussion with our partners. These were intense times of watching, listening, thinking, feeling, talking, learning, realizing, reflecting.

**Left:** One of the powerful sculptures in Birmingham's Kelly Ingram Park. **Top:** Wendy McFadden with her Sankofa partner, Paulita Todhunter, who teaches at an Evangelical Covenant school in Minneapolis. **Opposite page:** Water streams down this granite wall at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery.



Wendy McFadden



**Left:** Participants in the Sankofa Journey linger at the somber Civil Rights Memorial at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery. **Below:** This memorable stained glass image was a gift from the people of Wales to members of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham after the bombing that killed four girls in 1963.

The Evangelical Covenant Church draws on the same scripture that the Church of the Brethren uses in its multicultural work: Revelation 7:9. "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

Our leader, Debbie Blue, said: "If that's how things are going to end up, we believe we should be practicing now."

She added: "I dare you to be uncomfortable for the sake of Christ."

## What do I remember most clearly from this tour of the South?

- Engaging in an impromptu worship service while waiting for a speaker to arrive. We experienced a sermon on Joshua, a dynamic description of the elements of black worship, and spirited singing.
- Descending into the cellar at Slave Haven and imagining what it would be like to wait there for days or weeks until it was safe to escape to the Mississippi River.
- Lingering at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery and touching the names that are etched into the granite table and visible through the water spilling across the surface.
- Singing spirituals just after crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge.
- Spending time with my gracious partner. This was her third Sankofa trip, and I marveled gratefully at the many African Americans in the group who were willing to repeat the experience so that others could have a partner.



**IN BETWEEN VISITS, OUR HOURS ON THE BUS WERE SPENT STUDYING VIDEOS ABOUT RACE AND ENGAGING IN DISCUSSION WITH OUR PARTNERS. THESE WERE INTENSE TIMES OF WATCHING, LISTENING, THINKING, FEELING, TALKING, LEARNING, REALIZING, REFLECTING.**

## SEPARATE NO MORE

A 2007 Annual Conference statement recommends ways the Church of the Brethren can become more multicultural. Find the paper at [www.brethren.org/2007intercultural](http://www.brethren.org/2007intercultural).

When our group assembled on the first evening, Debbie had us go around the circle and say how we wanted to be identified. At first we were confused, since we had already said our names: Did she want us to give our nicknames?

No, she wanted us to say how we preferred to be identified racially. As we made our way around the large circle, it became clear that the people of color already knew their answers and the white people had to think. One white man said that it was the first time he'd ever been asked that question.

That really was the point of the exercise—and the beginning of the

Sankofa learning experience. In general, white people have rarely had to think about their race—and most have never had to. In contrast, people of color think about it every day.

We 46 travelers started at different places, and we ended up at different places. But we all moved—and are more likely to keep moving because of this journey. As we debriefed in a church basement in Portage, Ind., individuals expressed a range of difficult emotions: anger, guilt, fear, shame, confusion, betrayal. One African American participant wept as she realized she had failed to teach her daughter her own history. At the same time, there were also expressions of pride, admiration, heightened sensitivity, healing, and growth. We laughed and we cried together.

What I found most meaningful was the power of entering another person's story. There is harm done when a people's story is not heard. And there is healing when the story is treated as important.

I have a new appreciation for the courage, creativity, and commitment to nonviolence of the many people whose stories are told in the civil rights sites that we visited. Our schoolchildren tend to hear about the same four people year after year during Black History Month: Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass. But many more stories are documented, and we are all impoverished when we don't know them.

It is my dream that many others within the Church of the Brethren will have the opportunity to spend a weekend on a bus. If not this bus, then another. In 2007 the Church of the Brethren adopted a statement called "Separate No More," in which we promised to take certain steps to help us move toward a more colorful church. Five years later we have taken few of those steps. How can we get on board? As one African American pastor in our group said, "It took courage to get on this bus, but God is calling us."

When I was preparing for the trip, I was asked by the organizers to try to find my own partner. So I contacted an African American sister who I've known for a long time. She was interested, but had to decline because of a schedule conflict. During our conversation she confided that she was just about to leave the Church of the Brethren.

"I'm just tired of trying to find a congregation that has people who look like me," she said with a weariness of the soul.

In a sense, this bus ride was for her—and all the others who live every day with a reality that most white people are oblivious to. It was a journey to the past that begins to free all of us to move forward together.

In our closing moments, co-leader Dick Lucco read from Acts 10 and then repeated the final verse, where Peter is invited to "stay for several days."

"That's what sankofa is—" he said, "staying with each other for several days." ■



**IN 2007 THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHERN ADOPTED A STATEMENT CALLED "SEPARATE NO MORE," IN WHICH WE PROMISED TO TAKE CERTAIN STEPS TO HELP US MOVE TOWARD A MORE COLORFUL CHURCH. FIVE YEARS LATER WE HAVE TAKEN FEW OF THOSE STEPS. HOW CAN WE GET ON BOARD? AS ONE AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTOR IN OUR GROUP SAID, "IT TOOK COURAGE TO GET ON THIS BUS, BUT GOD IS CALLING US."**

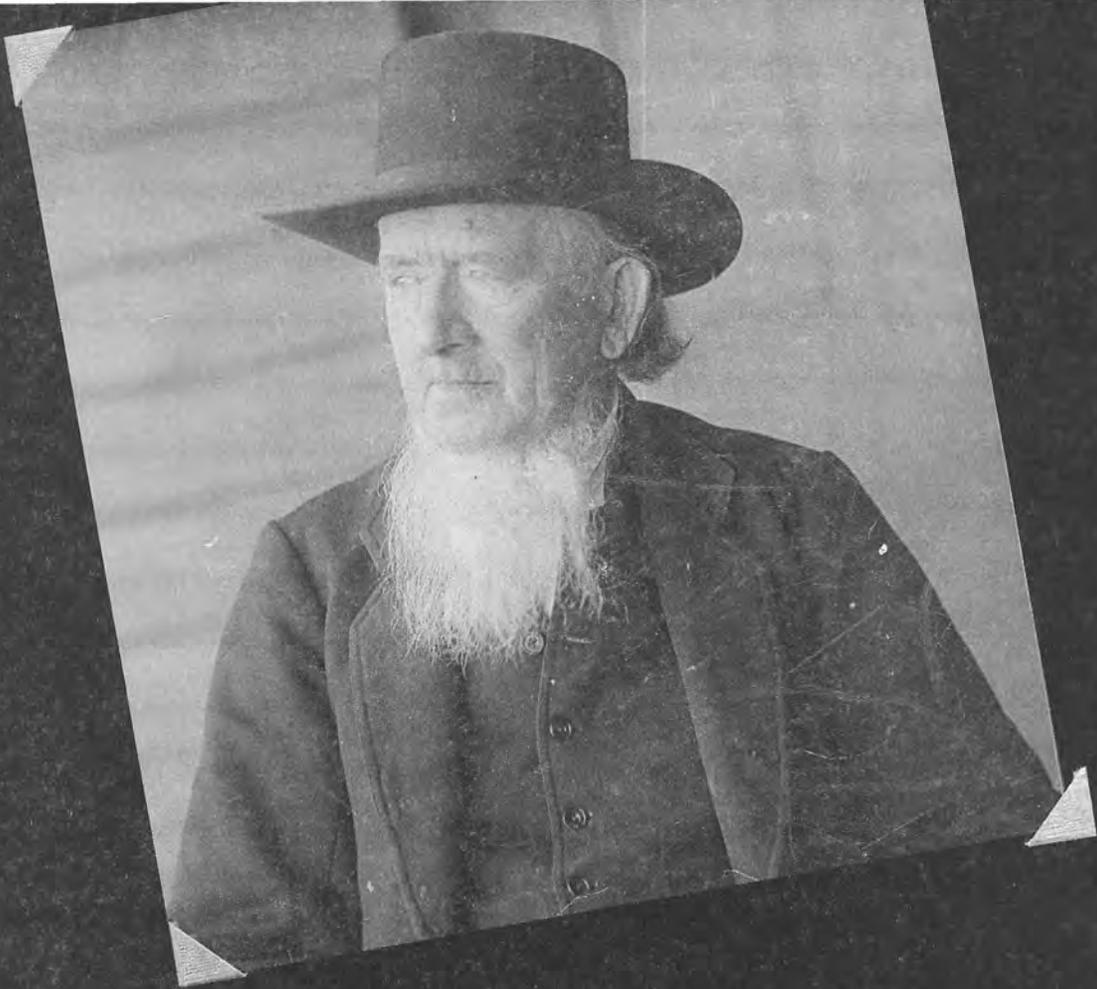
## CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TOGETHER

The Sankofa Journey was described four years ago at a meeting of Christian Churches Together, a relatively young organization that brings together the broadest grouping of Christians in the US. They are organized into five "families"—Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Black, Historic Protestant, and Orthodox.

CCT has focused its attention on several topics that unite these families. So far these have been poverty, evangelism, and racism. In 2011 the annual meeting took place in Birmingham, where the group issued a brief "letter from Birmingham" after several days of study and learning. In 2012 the annual meeting was in Memphis, where the topic of racism was further explored.

CCT is preparing a lengthier response to Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," to be issued in 2013. King's letter, which will then be 50 years old, was originally written to a group of clergy. So far as anyone knows, this will be the first official response from church leaders.

Wendy McFadden is publisher of Brethren Press and Communications for the Church of the Brethren. She represents the church on the steering committee of Christian Churches Together.



All I really need to know I learned from  
**Abraham Harley**  
**CASSEL**

by Frank Ramirez

**A**braham Harley Cassel (1820-1908) did not have what you would call an affirming childhood.

The young Cassel had a passion for reading, and for owning books, but his illiterate father Yelles Cassel was adamantly opposed. Like some other Brethren of his era, he believed the more education you had, the greater the possibilities for sin.

As a result, Cassel was largely forbidden to attend school. A sister taught him to read, and to speak English. In an effort to prevent him time and energy to read it is said that Yelles worked his teenage son so hard that his health was compromised the rest of his life. Still, thanks to his own determina-

tion, and his ceaseless self-education, Cassel grew up to satisfy his longing for books and reading in a prodigious way. Though largely forgotten today, the plain-garbed Dunker had a reputation throughout the literary world of the 19th century as a bibliophile, historian, and antiquarian.

Accounts vary, but most people agree that his world-famous private library numbered at least 50,000 items, including books, manuscripts, private letters, pamphlets, and documents. It is not too much to say that much of the history of 18th and 19th century Brethren would have been lost without him. (For more on Cassel's story, see Kermon Thomasson's article in the October 1978



**AS I AM A VERY EXTENSIVE READER, AND IN POSSESSION OF A LIBRARY OF AT LEAST 3000 VOLUMES CHIEFLY OF OLD AND RARE AUTHORS, TO WHICH BUT FEW OF YOUR READERS MAY HAVE ACCESS, & YET I FIND SO MANY VALUABLE GEMS IN THEM, THAT I THOUGHT A FEW GLEANINGS FROM THEM COULD NOT BE UNACCEPTABLE TO YOUR READERS.**

*Messenger*, pp. 17-22. You can find a digital version online at: <http://archive.org/details/messenger1978127112roye>.)

I first came to admire Abraham Harley Cassel in the late '70s while a student at Bethany Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Ill. At that time, a great portion of Cassel's collection was housed in the library on Bethany's campus. The collection, much of it unique and rare, was being catalogued volume by volume.

I worked at the library to help pay my way, and during the summer I was sent down into the catacombs where, under the tutelage of Brethren historian Hedda Durnbaugh, I was allowed to help restore the leather and vellum covers of some of Cassel's oldest volumes.

It was heaven! I would open treasure after treasure and gradually set aside, with Hedda's encouragement, a small shelf of books, volumes like *The History of Goody Two-Shoes*, or an 18th century book about an interplanetary traveler who comes to study humanity, or the second edition of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner"—my list went on and on.

Because of Cassel's lack of education, he insisted he was not qualified to be a writer, and refused to write a history about the Brethren despite the encouragement of others. However, he published many articles on history, Brethren or otherwise, in Brethren and non-Brethren magazines.

I'm currently compiling a collection of Cassel's historical writings, and am more impressed than ever with his wit and wisdom. As I work to complete the book, I thought I'd share a few of the things I've learned from this wonderful, humble, opinionated, intelligent, thoughtful, and witty man. And although I'm exaggerating only a little, with apologies to Robert Fulghum, I'll assert: All I really need to know I learned from Abraham Harley Cassel.

#### **Biblical context is key**

Cassel collected a large number of German and English language Bibles. He was willing to compare and contrast passages to gain a clearer picture of what the biblical writers meant. For example, in one letter to his friend Obed Snowberger he copied out six different translations of the

same verse from Isaiah, including the very obscure 1853 version translated by Rabbi Isaac Leeser.

In contrast to proof-texters, who brandish their isolated biblical verses like swords, Cassel insisted, in an article titled "On the Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost,"

*It will be proper therefore . . . to understand this or any other text of scripture, by consulting the scripture itself, and considering the occasion of the words and their connection with what precedes and with what follows; for the general mistake in interpreting Scripture, is that of looking up the sentences as independent sentences, and not sufficiently regarding the context. . . .*

#### **Education is important for its own sake**

As mentioned earlier, Cassel was prevented from pursuing the education he hungered for. Nowadays one often hears that one should choose a path of education that leads to the most dollars, as if paying off student loans were all that mattered. But in "On the Consolation of Education" Cassel made the opposite point.

*Permit me to say that a parent in the middle rank of life, who is able to place his son but little above abject dependence would contribute more to his real happiness by giving him a taste for those liberal studies which would tend to exalt his nature than by making him the most successful merchant, or trader without an education. . . . For to possess thousands with the narrow spirit of a mere shop-keeper, can add but little to respectability. But to possess a just taste for a Virgil or a Milton . . . to be capable of feeling their beauties, with but the commonest comforts and conveniences of life . . . (is) more desirable than . . . wealth . . .*

#### **Sometimes you've got to put yourself forward**

It must have taken a good deal of bravery for one who considered his skills as a writer meager at best, but when in 1851 Henry Kurtz published the first Brethren periodical of the 19th century, Cassel realized that here was a unique venue for



THERE WERE AN UNUSUAL NUMBER OF YOUNG SISTERS PRESENT FROM ADJOINING CONGREGATIONS AND AMONG THEM WAS ONE SO FULL OF SWEETNESS AND BEAUTY THAT SHE FELT INTO HIS EYES AND HEART AS THE CHIEF ONE "AMONG TEN THOUSAND," ...IMAGINE HIS CHAGRIN WHEN HE DISCOVERED THAT THE FAIR YOUNG SISTER WAS A MARRIED WOMAN.

sharing the fruits of his extensive collecting and reading, and, not waiting to be asked, put himself forward.

Did he suffer a crisis of confidence and hesitate before he wrote the following words? I wonder. Regardless, he put himself forward, and in signing himself Theophilus, the name adopted by Alexander Mack, Jr., during his temporary exile from the Brethren, he might have been showing off, just a little bit:

*As I am a very extensive reader, and in possession of a library of at least 3000 volumes chiefly of old and rare authors, to which but few of your readers may have access, & yet I find so many valuable gems in them, that I thought a few gleanings from them could not be unacceptable to your readers. . . . But I submit all entirely to your judgment, to dispose of as you may think proper, that is to print it all or in part as you may want matter to fill up its columns.*

**Speak truth to power—it's okay to deflate self-important people**

One of the great controversies for Brethren in the 19th century was the mode of footwashing. Many Brethren, indeed sometimes whole congregations, were disfellowshipped because they refused to practice what was called the Double Mode—where two deacons would travel down a line of seated Brethren, one washing, and the other drying their feet. Cassel insisted that the Single Mode (each brother or sister having their feet washed and washing the feet of another in turn) was the original mode. In 1871 the Annual Meeting sent Daniel P. Sayler to research, investigate, and write a report, presumably to prove that the Double Mode was the original mode. In the report, Sayler said he had been through the extensive Cassel library and found nothing to disprove the Double Mode as that used by what they, in those days, called the "ancient brethren."

Cassel fired back:

*He (Sayler) came here . . . on a Saturday afternoon. I was not at home when they came, but they were kindly received by my family (who were all members), and requested to stay, as I would soon be home, but they would not. My son and others of the family pressed them to stay, as it was our regular meeting Sunday, and it so happened that we had no preacher, therefore they were more anxious that they*

*should stay and preach for us; but no, they would not, and stayed all night (unknown to us) near by with a stranger where they had no business. But while they were here, Brother Sayler said they would for all like to see the library, so as to have an idea of its nature and size. My son then took them up (the room is forty feet long in the clear), and they walked through to the end of it on the one side, and back again on the other to the stairway, without asking a question or looking at anything, and were, altogether, hardly five minutes in it. They then reported that they had been to see Brother Cassel, but found nothing on foot-washing, as he asserts.*

**If you have to suffer fools, have fun with it**

In response to an article by H. H. Myers locating Paradise at the North Pole, Cassel, tongue firmly in cheek, did not keep his pen in check. He wrote:

*I have read most of the Arctic Explorations from Heemskirks in 1596 to the present time and all that ventured far enough to agree that there is neither Tree nor Shrub nor vegetation of any Kind to be found there. And so intensely cold that not even a drop of Water can exist there. At the nearest approach yet made the Thermometer registered from 60 to 65 degrees below zero, which is about one hundred below the freezing point, consequently there are no Rivers there, and also no soil to produce anything. The scene is a boundless region of Eternal Ice that no Human being ever traversed and many valuable lives were sacrificed in the attempt of it.*

Cassel concluded:

*The Bible and Webster define Paradise as a place of Bliss, a region of Supreme felicity or delight. But if the North Pole should be that place I would feel like praying Lord save me from such a Paradise.*

**Cite your sources**

In Cassel's day it was the regular practice to simply cut and paste—probably literally, since they couldn't do it with a mouse. After all, no one could Google a line from an essay to see if it was original. Cassel himself tended to carefully cite his sources. Others did not. So, having defined "Plagiarism" as "A thief in literature, one who

purloins the writing of another and offers them to the public as his own," Cassel named names:

*We would not suppose anybody knowingly guilty of such meanness; and yet, I have frequently been grieved on account of it; even by Brethren whom I love. And quite recently brother Moses Miller... (used in) an article in the Brethren's Almanac, under the heading Eld. George Kline... a verbatim transcript of my own indefatigable researches—published under their own name without my knowledge and without the least credit to the original.*

Then, with a little hearts and flowers dancing in the background, he continued:

*While I spent my life, and my eyesight nearly, besides thousands of hard earned treasure in collecting and reproducing such materials of the past, that were long since buried in the grave of oblivion, I ask, is it right, or is it honorable for others now to publish these researches (as if they were antiquarians themselves) without ever mentioning the source from which such information is obtained.*

#### **Don't be afraid to be yourself**

Then again, sometimes Cassel was not only wrong, but a little ridiculous. In 1894, when his eyesight and health were failing, Abraham Harley Cassel spent four weeks explaining why he thought it was important for women to wear the prayer covering. He covered biblical texts and social context, but when he got down to brass tacks, he explained if married women didn't wear prayer coverings, how were the guys going to know which gals were available?

After all, he said, "A beautiful young married sister of my acquaintance was twice offered young Mens Company home from meeting not knowing that she was married." Cassel's chief example was most illuminating.

*I also knew a young Brother who was in search of a companion. He happened to be at a Love Feast where he was a stranger. There were an unusual number of young sisters present from adjoining congregations and among them was one so full of sweetness and beauty that she felt into his Eyes and Heart as the Chief one "among ten thousand," . . . Imagine his chagrin when he discovered that the Fair young sister was a married woman.*

Oddly, he himself "was sharply reproved by a good Brother at a Love Feast some distance from home for making myself too intimate with a young sister. . . . I



thanked him for his well meant Reproof and told him she was my wife." [It should be pointed out that Cassel married Elizabeth Rhoades, a Quaker woman who evidently did not wear a prayer covering, and whom his father Yelles sharply disapproved of until he got to know her better, after which he told his son he didn't deserve a wife that wonderful. Cassel couldn't win for losing.]

Abraham Harley Cassel often ended letters and articles with an admonition that he had gone on too long, so I must end as well. Yet there are other lessons I've learned from reading Cassel. For example:

*It's not how you start, but how you finish.*

*It's what you know and who you are, not what degree you have, that matter.*

*There's a reason we study history. Sometimes the majority is wrong.*

*Save stuff.*

*Time will tell.*

But most of all, when I think of the arc of Cassel's life, with almost no schooling, and how he ended respected and admired, I'd probably say the greatest thing I learned from Abraham Harley Cassel is, "If life hands you lemons, make a lemon meringue pie."

I like pie better than lemonade. It sticks with you longer. And I like words. And one way to honor the Living Word is to read and write words. Honest. **W**

Frank Ramirez is the pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

# A holy waste

by Ken Gibble

HER LOVE WAS SPONTANEOUS,  
GENEROUS, EXTRAVAGANT,  
OVERFLOWING. SHE ACTED OUT OF  
THE ABUNDANCE OF HER HEART.

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**H**ow do you read the Bible?

Do you, as I sometimes do, look for instruction on how to make decisions, to learn what the right thing to do is? Do you read to find advice, rules, and commandments?

Or do you, as I sometimes do, try to find passages that reinforce decisions, opinions, ideas that you already hold?

If either—or both—of these approaches to Bible reading is your usual method, you certainly can find what you are looking for. And it doesn't matter if you consider yourself conservative, progressive, or somewhere in between.

But how about another approach? How about putting yourself, as much as possible, into the story? To do so calls for some imagination, a big dose of humility, and a willingness to take seriously the prayer we sometimes sing as a hymn: "Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me."

Sometimes I have been able to do that. And when I do, I frequently discover some surprises. And not always pleasant ones. It does require some courage because the Bible is a surprising book. A case in point is what happened to me when I was reading a story that appears in Mark's Gospel (14:3-9).

In the story, Jesus is a dinner guest of Simon, whom Mark calls a "leper." Although we aren't told that Simon had been healed by Jesus, that may have been the case. As the story opens, a woman comes into the room carrying a jar of "costly ointment," which she pours on Jesus' head.

Here is where I tried to put myself into the story. I imagined that I was one of the disciples watching the scene. Several of us start mumbling among ourselves: "Why was this ointment wasted like this? It could have been sold and the money given to the poor." We are critical, indignant. What a waste!

When Jesus comes to the woman's defense, we are even more troubled. "You always have the poor with you," he says.

For you to understand why it is very easy for me to find myself mumbling along with my fellow disciples, you need to know a little bit about me. I come from bona fide Pennsylvania German stock, and from a family that traces its history as part of the Church of the Brethren. From the time I was old enough to jingle coins in my pocket, I was taught that Ben Franklin's adage—"A penny saved is a penny earned"—ranked right up there next to the Ten Commandments.

As if blood and religion weren't enough to shape my thinking, family history also played a role. My parents were married exactly one year before the 1929 stock market crash. The first decade of their life together corresponded with that bleak period in the American experience known as The Great Depression. Small wonder then that my childhood included such rituals as the saving of string as well as severe fiscal limits on spending for such things as candy and chewing gum.



It was impressed upon me that borrowing was an undesirable practice. When, not long after they were married, my parents saw neighbors and friends fall behind on mortgage payments to the bank and lose their house or their farm, they vowed never to suffer such a calamity themselves. My father paid cash for every car he owned. He and Mother carefully saved their money until the day came when they could buy a house of their own. It was an old house, with no indoor plumbing or central heat. But it was theirs—ours. The terms of the purchase? Well, the down payment was 100 percent of the purchase price. That's one way to save on interest payments! Improvements to the house came later, when they could afford them, which meant: pay for them in cash.

We lived by the unspoken motto of "Waste not, want not." And while there were times we wanted (at least we children did), I can assure you that we did not waste. No one was permitted to leave the table if food remained on the plate. Leftovers were "kept-overs" and "served-overs," not throwaways.

The point of this recital is not to make any of you feel sorry for me. (I don't feel sorry about it, so why should you?) Nor is it to claim that my experience was unique (some of you may have similar memories), or to make a plea for a return to the practices of a bygone era.

The point I am trying to make is that in terms of personal economics, I am an arch-conservative. I not only believe the government spends too much, I believe everybody spends too much. I think recycling ought to be enforced by law. In the parable Jesus once told about the talents, I would have been the guy who dug a hole and buried his gold for fear of losing it in a risky venture. At my house, I'm always turning down the heat and turning out the lights at night so zealously that I sometimes run into the door frame on my way to the bathroom.

In other words, had I been there when the woman emptied that jar of expensive ointment on the head of Jesus, I would have hit the roof. What a waste! Think of all the good that could have been done with that money.

That's me. I don't think it would have been any great concern for the poor that would have upset me. I think it would have been the principle of the thing—pouring away that precious ointment like so much water. A dab or two behind the ear, all right. But the whole bottle? Outrageous! I'm with the disciples all the way on this one. Not with Jesus.

With that last statement, I am brought up short. I'm sur-

prised—shocked—to find myself on the wrong side of Jesus.

The woman who came to Jesus did not calculate what her gift of love would cost. Her love was spontaneous, generous, extravagant, overflowing. She acted out of the abundance of her heart. That's why Jesus accepted her gift. He didn't say, "Now, wait a minute. Have you thought this through? Exactly what are your motives? Do you have any idea what this costs?"

There is a time for careful calculation, for setting goals and objectives, for being as reasonable and practical as one can be. But there is also a time to let all such calculation go. —and maybe you as well—dare not allow management by objectives to invade our caring, our loving, our giving, our worship. We need to discover the meaning of holy waste.

Early in my work as a pastor, a woman in our church told me an amusing story about taking her little boy Christmas shopping in New York City. She had given him

## THERE IS A TIME FOR ... BEING AS REASONABLE AND PRACTICAL AS ONE CAN BE. BUT THERE IS ALSO A TIME TO LET ALL SUCH CALCULATION GO.

some money and told him he could use it to buy presents for relatives. The only trouble was, her son could not resist the appeals of the sidewalk bell-ringers. Back then, they dressed in Santa Claus costumes. Before mother and son had gone many blocks, all the boy's funds had been deposited into Salvation Army pots. Foolish? I guess so. Wasteful? Maybe. But if so, then it was surely a holy waste—as that mother's memory so eloquently attested.

One more thing. The story of the woman anointing Jesus takes place only three days before Jesus was crucified. No wonder Jesus remarked that the woman had anointed his body in preparation for burial. Hearing that, we cannot help but think of the ultimate in holy waste. For we remember that the Messiah, God's Anointed One, must waste himself in order to become the Christ. And the cross becomes the apparent sacrifice of all that is good and reasonable and loving.

What a waste is this! Yet, in God's wisdom, it is a saving waste. It is the holiest of wastes and, our faith tells us, it is the bringer of salvation. **W**

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# Where has the Spirit gone?

by Joshua Brockway

**WE HAVE TRUSTED A SYSTEM THAT IS BASED ON EXPEDIENCY TO DO THE HARD WORK OF LISTENING AND WAITING, WHICH IS AT THE CORE OF DISCERNING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**B**rethren often have lived at the intersection of the inner and the outer, the individual and the community. This often is seen vividly at Annual Conference. Individuals and congregations ask questions of the gathered church, trusting that the corporate voice gathers together the fullness of God's wisdom. In essence, the collection of voices helps summarize the understanding of the church related to the questions of the day. In more traditional language, the gathered body of Christ enters into discernment.

There was a time when the discernment of the Annual Meeting was achieved by consensus. As the denomination grew, achievement of consensus was replaced, in favor of pragmatism, by parliamentary procedure. Today, instead

of gathering the wisdom of the body of Christ—trusting the equal access to the Holy Spirit by all believers—the Brethren have moved on to a sometimes antagonistic process where the majority rule the day.

To be fair, Robert's Rules of Order do allow some space for more weighty decisions to be established by a two-thirds majority vote, and tries to maintain the rights of the minority. Yet the effect is still the same. Rather than listening to the insights and wisdom of all—even those who dissent—the process creates winners and losers.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians a similar division seems to be taking place. Not long after his own mission to the Gentiles there, a group of "Judaizers" has begun splitting the congregation. In the first few verses it is clear that Paul

is aggravated at the developments. At the close of the letter, Paul offers his standard summary of the freedom granted in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit among those who confess Christ. (See I Corinthians for a similar, more positive, statement of the Spirit's presence among the church.) He says, by way of paraphrase, that there are ways to know the Spirit is present: first, the moral actions of the church reflect a transformation; second, the community itself will manifest fruits of the Spirit.

Many of our brothers and sisters today are quick to point out signs of the absence of the Holy Spirit: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery. Yet Paul continues the list. Things like hatred, discord, jealousy, selfish ambition, and dissensions reveal that a person and a community have yet to receive the freedom of Christ, and thus a life in the Spirit. The fruits then, are the opposite side of the coin. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). At the close of chapter five, Paul then admonishes the church. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Galatians 5:26). In a nice rhetorical way, Paul is revealing to the Galatians that the Spirit is not present and active in their community.

I dare say that the Church of the Brethren is the modern-day Church of Galatia. We may not be provoking each other about the necessity of circumcision, but we do assume antagonism is the general state of the church. What is more, we have lost patience, self-control, and all the other markers of the Spirit's presence.

We no longer practice discernment today, but we have convinced ourselves that we have done what discernment requires. We have trusted a system that is based on expediency to do the hard work of listening and waiting, which is at the core of discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit. Frankly, we no longer can claim to know the movement of the Spirit if this system of antagonism and provocation in the name of justice and purity persists. Scripture is clear that we can know we are in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit when our actions toward one another manifest the workings of that same Spirit.

In Acts 11:1-18 we witness the first Christians confronting the newness of Christ's resurrection and asking just what it means now that Christ has come. Peter's testimony of both his dream and the clear signs of the Spirit among the house of Cornelius present a problem for the Jewish community: Can the church now include those who have been outside the Hebrew people for generations? Has God begun to welcome in the Gentiles? Of course, Luke paints a kind of idyllic picture of that first council, yet the image echoes what Paul says to the Galatians. When the Spirit is moving, peace and unity emerge. All trust in the decision because it is clearly the

## WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR THE CHURCH TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW OF DISCERNMENT AND SUBMISSION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT?

work of the Spirit, both in the house of Cornelius and in the deliberative consensus. As contemporary readers, we might assume that they had some kind of parliamentary procedure to guide their conversations. Yet, it is clear they are not looking for a democratic process. Instead, they are asking one another if the Spirit has been at work.

Modern Brethren, however, seem to have substituted a process for the work of the Spirit. We have come to a place where we cannot imagine our decisions in terms other than majority votes. Even those who vocally decry recent actions in our gatherings fail to see that parliamentary procedure has deeply formed us as a people. So we make assertions that things have or have not been done in proper ways—either in good faith or according to proper procedure.

The process we have adopted has formed us into a people who value efficiency and majority rule. Instead of listening, we have adopted a liturgy of positioning and speeches. Rather than discernment we have chosen blind ballots to assess the will of the people. The end result is a people divided among interest groups who seek to maneuver and posture according to the rules of order and not in an effort to cultivate the workings of the Holy Spirit. Money, time, and victory are more important than love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control.

What could be further from the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Have we become so accustomed to the partisan discourse of our political system that we cannot imagine that a sister in Christ can have something to teach us? Are we so beholden to the maxim that "time is money" that we place greater value on shorter gatherings at the expense of making sure that others are heard?

For a church that holds high the scriptures as our rule for faith and practice, we have quickly assumed that we cannot agree, and that some other mode of discourse must guide us. What would it look like for the church to take the long view of discernment and submission to the Holy Spirit? What if we did not make a decision until we could point to the fruits of the Holy Spirit as a sign that we have reached a conclusion? ❏

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

## Leadership summit issues report following discussion of current state of the church

*At the invitation of the general secretary, 32 Church of the Brethren members convened on March 28-30 for a leadership summit. Participants hold both formal and informal leadership positions within the denomination. The purpose of the summit was to prayerfully examine the dynamics of leadership needed in the church today.*

*"Given the current state of the church," said general secretary Stan Noffsinger, "now is an important time to gather together a group of leaders from across the Church of the Brethren, in order to consider how the church may move forward from this place and time."*

*Helping to facilitate the discussion were Jayne Seminare Docherty, a professor of leadership and public policy at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., and Roger Foster, a graduate of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Following is a report from the meeting.*

**B**rethren leaders from across the denomination met in a "learning laboratory" in Leesburg, Va. The summit participants (see names listed below) comprise a diverse group from throughout the church, occupying formal and informal positions of leadership, holding different interpretations of scripture and varying understandings of authority, and bringing different assessments of our long-term sustainability as a denomination in light of current internal conflicts.

Between Wednesday afternoon and Friday noon, we listened and talked with one another about a range of issues, engaging with one another in good faith to listen deeply to each other in our differences and disagreements.

Although our conversations focused on discernment rather than on decisions or recommendations, we participated in processes which provided opportunities to express our visions for the Church of the Brethren, and to explore processes which could lead us forward. We specifically discussed the role of Annual Conference; our concerns over denominational viability; issues of authority and accountability; interpretations of scripture; congregational, district, and national leadership; and our denominational programming/mission.

Our conversations revealed differing stories and perceptions of specific actions of the 2011 Annual Conference, e.g. Standing Committee's recommendation to return "A Statement of Confession and Commitment" and "Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships;" the reaffirmation of the 1983 "Paper on Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective;" and the

vote to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process.

Our conversations also revealed differing perceptions of the intent, impact, and scope of decisions and position statements after 2011 Annual Conference (e.g., the Statement of Inclusion from On Earth Peace; approval of a BMC booth at Annual Conference 2012; and acceptance of BMC as a Brethren Volunteer Service placement site).

We considered ways in which Annual Conference might move fully into its mission of uniting, strengthening and equipping the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus, becoming more a nourishing center and gathering place and less a place which marks divisions.

As we heard and expressed a genuine desire to hear and understand one another, we began the process of naming the struggle before us. We engaged in deep, truthful conversations about strongly held convictions and accompanying pain and difficulty. We shared both laughter and tears. The fullness of our discussion was limited not by our willingness to pursue reconciliation, but by the amount of time available.

Our conversations about our long-term viability as a united denomination raised the possibility of "parting ways" and disclosed some despair related to that possibility—without embracing or advocating the notion of a "divorce," a metaphor that some participants used to discuss their concerns.

As the Spirit of God moved among us, we sensed a need for humility; we heard a call to embrace a teachable spirit.

As we listened to one another, we heard and considered these observations:

- that our struggle over the church's response to homosexuality/human sexuality is both a conflict in its own right and also the presenting face of even deeper conflicts that have endured for a long time;
- that staying together as a church requires an enormous commitment of time, energy, and a willingness to listen across our differences;
- that in order to thrive as a church, we must discover our common ground and source of sustenance;
- that both actions and perceptions matter; some leadership actions, though well-intended, have been perceived negatively, leading to suspicion, mistrust and brokenness;
- that because actions and perceptions matter, both leaders at every level and members of their constituency bear a responsibility to be pro-active. Leaders in every group are called to a heightened awareness that their actions might be perceived in ways they had not intend-

ed; members are called to seek out the fullest range of information, as they interpret leadership actions.

- that we can affirm a place for dissent within our body, and we wonder how we should handle the tension which arises when people respond differently, in good conscience, when “the church” has taken a particular stand;

- that the ways we implement our denominational structures and processes, as well as our theological heritage of “over-againstness” may actually contribute to the intensity and duration of the conflicts we experience; and

- that as a diverse group of Brethren, we can affirm that we are Christ-centered, relational, and service-oriented.

As we listened to one another, we heard these desires expressed:

- a desire and call for patience, kindness, and forbearance;

- a desire for a renewed commitment

among leaders at all levels (individuals, congregations, districts, national) to a paradigm of leadership which seeks to tell the truth in a loving manner, provides positive support, shares in mutual refreshment, responds in a timely manner, and is an example of biblical models of reconciliation and conflict transformation. Such a paradigm would point us away from prideful self-revelation, forms of criticism which demonstrate contempt, actions that increase mistrust, and attitudes which might inspire acts of violence in any form;

- a desire to work together as a church to identify core biblical/theological understandings which, we pray, will lead to common convictions for nurturing and sustaining efforts to contribute to the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom;

- and a desire to help develop a climate which encourages and continues the kind of healing conversations we experienced at the summit—throughout “the grassroots” and every sector of the denomination.

**The report was signed by the following participants:**

*Robert Alley,  
Bridgewater, Va.*

*Leah Hileman,  
Cape Coral, Fla.*

*Steve Sauder,  
Oakland, Md.*

*Becky Ball-Miller,  
Goshen, Ind.*

*Ruthann K. Johansen,  
Bethany Seminary*

*Jonathan Shively,  
Church of the Brethren  
Congregational Life*

*Ben Barlow,  
Ellicott City, Md.*

*Georgia Markey,  
Southern Pennsylvania  
District*

*David Shumate,  
Virlina District*

*Don Booz,  
Pacific Southwest District*

*Kim McDowell,  
Hyattsville, Md.*

*Craig Smith,  
Atlantic Northeast District*

*Paul Brubaker,  
Ephrata, Pa.*

*Belita Mitchell,  
Harrisburg, Pa.*

*David Steele,  
Middle Pennsylvania District*

*Jeff Carter,  
Manassas, Va.*

*Paul Munday,  
Frederick, Md.*

*Phil Stone, Sr.,  
Harrisonburg, Va.*

*Ruben Deoleo,  
Lancaster, Pa.*

*Stan Noffsinger,  
General Secretary*

*Jo Young Switzer,  
Manchester College*

*Chris Douglas,  
Church of the Brethren  
Conference Office*

*Nate Polzin,  
Michigan District*

*Katie Shaw Thompson,  
Ivester, Iowa*

*Mary Jo Flory-Steury,  
Associate General Secretary*

*Judy Mills Reimer,  
Roanoke, Va.*

*Parker Thompson,  
Ivester, Iowa*

*Ken Geisewite,  
Loganton, Pa.*

*Pamela Reist,  
Elizabethtown, Pa.*

*Guy Wampler,  
Lancaster, Pa.*

*Andy Hamilton,  
Akron, Ohio*

*Ken Miller Rieman,  
Seattle, Wash.*

**UPCOMINGEVENTS**

**May 17 Ascension Day**

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

**May 27 Pentecost**

**May 28 Memorial Day**, the Church of the Brethren offices are closed

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

**June 10-29 Brethren Volunteer Service summer unit orientation**

**June 18-22 National Young Adult Conference**, Knoxville, Tenn.



The Brethren Digital Archives group met April 23 at the Brethren Heritage Center in Brookeville, Ohio. The project is entering phase two of digitizing historical Brethren periodicals. The archive is available at <http://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

## Brethren Digital Archives project enters next phase

The Brethren Digital Archives committee met April 23 at the Brethren Heritage Center in Brookeville, Ohio. The group is guiding a project to digitize Brethren periodicals and publications. This is the second phase of the digitization process.

Periodicals to be scanned for the archive from the Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA) include *The Brethren's Missionary Visitor*, *Der Bruderbote*, *The Gospel Messenger*, and the *Progressive Christian*. Other periodicals will be scanned from various institutions, including Bridgewater (Va.) College and Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The most extensive undertaking will be *The Gospel Messenger*, which is bound by year in 82 volumes.

Attending the meeting were Terry Barkley, Virginia

Harness, Larry Heisey, Eric Bradley, Gary Kocheiser, Liz Cutler Gates, Steve Bayer, as well as Jeff Bach and Jeanine Wine via conference call. Three different Brethren groups were represented at the meeting: Church of the Brethren, Grace Brethren, and Old German Baptist Brethren. The Dunkard Brethren are also involved in the project, but their representative was unable to attend.

Publications already available in the archive may be found at <http://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>. Periodicals can be read online or downloaded in a variety of forms, including PDF. The text is searchable, and there is an audio component to hear the text read out loud.

## New phone system is installed at Church of the Brethren offices

A new telephone system has been installed for the Church of the Brethren at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The new VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) system is expected to save the church thousands of dollars and is a significant upgrade of telephone service. Installation took place March 12.

Main telephone numbers for the Church of the Brethren remain the same: 847-742-5100, 800-323-8039

(toll free), 847-742-6103 (fax).

Also unchanged is the Brethren Press customer service number at 800-441-3712.

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) main numbers continue to be 847-695-0200 and 800-746-1505.

Employees have been assigned new extension numbers. New capabilities also offer staff the ability to view voice mail, identify callers via a computer connection, and forward

calls to cell phones when away from the office.

There are new options for those calling in as well. On calling either 847-742-5100 or 800-323-8039, a caller may dial an extension number at any time, or press 1 to access a menu of departments. Callers also may dial an employee's last name to be connected.

A listing of Church of the Brethren staff extensions is at [www.brethren.org/about/staff.html](http://www.brethren.org/about/staff.html).

*Conscientious objector David Stewart feeds patients in a senile ward at a mental hospital in Ft. Steilacoom, Wash., one of the Brethren-related Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps that opened in 1942. Some 15 of the CPS camps that are marking the 70th anniversary of their opening were under Church of the Brethren auspices.*

## MoR works on new network of conflict transformation practitioners

Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR) program coordinator Leslie Frye recently invited representatives from Mennonite Central Committee's Office of Criminal Justice, the Kansas Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR), and Anabaptist conflict transformation practitioners with a range of ages, colors, and affiliations to join MoR practitioners in conversation regarding the potential of forming a sustainable network for the continuing work of reconciliation. Hosted at the KIPCOR offices on the campus of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., participants took advantage of the rare opportunity to engage with a group of people doing similar work from a common faith perspective.

Over the day and a half together, they worked at articulating the values they share and the way those values inform the work they do as a springboard toward exploring ways they might work together most effectively. They also discussed various potential strategies for connecting, equipping, and utilizing practitioners to best resource faith communities who are facing conflict or change. Before departing, participants assigned working groups to further explore the potential for forming a network.

In the coming months, On Earth Peace will be reporting the ways these working groups will seek to expand the conversation in order to explore interest in defining a vision, mission, and strategic plan that will foster conflict-healthy faith communities by widening the circle of peace-with-justice practitioners (new and seasoned) working from an Anabaptist tradition. To become involved or for more information, contact Leslie Frye at 620-755-3940.



*Two of the participants in the MoR-hosted meeting on a new network of conflict transformation practitioners were Gary Flory (left) and Barbara Daté.*



## Civilian Public Service mark 70th anniversary

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of a number of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps where Church of the Brethren conscientious objectors worked during World War II. Some 15 CPS camps overseen by the Brethren Service Committee opened in 1942.

Under the agreement made between the National Service Board of Religious Objectors (NSBRO) and the US government to provide alternative service for conscientious objectors, the three Historic Peace Churches (Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Friends or Quakers) along with some other religious groups and organizations were given oversight of a number of the camps. However, the camps were operated by government departments or institutions like mental hospitals.

"Should local groups have energy and interest, this would provide an opportunity for local commemorations of the CPS experience and a way to reflect on issues of conscience today which were very active during the WWII era," notes Titus M. Peachey, peace education coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee US, who provided this list of Brethren CPS camps opened in 1942.

"The anniversary offers a good opportunity for local history to be remembered and to reflect on the way we tried to protect freedom of conscience . . . even during the 'good war.'"

For more information about the history of Civilian Public Service and the experiences of conscientious objectors who took part, go to <http://civilianpublicservice.org>.

## Ruthann Knechel Johansen to retire as Bethany president

Ruthann Knechel Johansen, president of Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., has announced her retirement, effective July 1, 2013. The announcement came in conjunction with the semi-annual meeting of the Bethany Seminary board of trustees.



Bethany Theological Seminary

Johansen began her tenure as the ninth president of Bethany Seminary on July 1, 2007, having most recently held the position of professor of literature and interdisciplinary studies and of a faculty fellow of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

During her time at Bethany, she helped lead the development of a new mission and vision statement and a five-year strategic plan. Beginning with her inaugural celebration, she established the Presidential Forum as the premier public event at Bethany, offering the seminary's space and resources for denominational and ecumenical exploration, learning, and discourse on important issues of faith and ethics. Her presidency also saw the hiring of a new academic dean, three new faculty members, and a new director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

In a statement to the seminary community Johansen

said, "I am grateful for the opportunity to work with wonderful colleagues, both as board members and employees, in higher education and in serving God, the church, and the world. I call us to continue to be faithful, as I will attempt to be during this last period, and as I expect the search committee and the board will be as well."

Carol Scheppard, chair of the board of trustees, reflected on Johansen's presidency: "As president Johansen transitions to the projects awaiting her in retirement, she leaves a rich legacy with Bethany. From the core foundations of the vision and mission statements and the comprehensive strategic plan, to the focused, energized, and convicted operations of the seminary community, Bethany is strong. We look forward with hope and confidence to Ruthann's leadership in the year ahead and to the growth and nurturing of the seeds she has planted under our next president."

Bethany trustee Rhonda Pittman Gingrich will serve as chair of the Presidential Search Committee, with Ted Flory, former member and chair of the board, serving as vice chair. The additional members of the committee are trustees David McFadden, John D. Miller, and Nathan Polzin; at-large representative Judy Mills Reimer; faculty representative Tara Hornbacker; and student representative Dylan Haro.

—Jenny Williams is director of communications and alumni relations at Bethany Seminary.

## Transitions at Juniata and Bridgewater

Thomas R. Kepple, under whose presidency the campus of Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., was transformed by an ambitious building plan and the most successful capital campaign in the college's history, plans to retire May 31, 2013. Kepple was named president July 1, 1998, and will have finished his 15th year leading Juniata by 2013.

Kepple came to Juniata from the University of the South, where he specialized in overseeing large-scale construction and renovation projects and long-term strategic planning. In the 15 years he led Juniata, the college's central campus has been renovated and in some cases rebuilt to consolidate arts, sports, and classroom instruction around a central quadrangle.

Kepple points to Juniata's student accomplishments as his personal touchstone, including a marked uptick in national and international awards received by Juniata students. Juniata's

athletic teams also have been successful during Kepple's tenure, earning six of Juniata's seven national championships in the past 15 years.

Many of Juniata's innovative academic programs and improvements to the college's infrastructure have made news on a national scale, which subsequently has helped raise the college's national profile. The Princeton Review noted in 2010 that "Juniata College has catapulted from regional to national status in the last decade."

Meanwhile, the Bridgewater (Va.) College Board of Trustees has accepted a request by George Cornelius to allow his contract as president to expire at the end of the current academic year. The board has appointed executive vice president Roy W. Ferguson, Jr. as interim president to succeed Cornelius, with the transition to be completed on May 14.

"After significant reflection, I have decided not to pursue an extension of



Thomas R. Kepple

my contract as president of the college," Cornelius stated. "I would like to conclude the efforts I've started on campus and then focus my efforts elsewhere. I look forward to partnering with my friend and colleague Roy Ferguson to ensure a smooth transition."



Carol Fike

*Christian Citizenship Seminar (CCS) 2012 poses for a group photo at the Environmental Protection Agency. "Many of the advisors said that this was the best agency presentation that they had ever been a part of," reported CCS coordinator Carol Fike.*

## Christian Citizenship Seminar considers our relationship with carbon

Fifty-two Church of the Brethren youth and adult advisors met for the 2012 Christian Citizenship Seminar (CCS) on April 14-19 in New York City and Washington, D.C. The theme focused on "Stepping Out: Our Relationship with Carbon."

The 41 high school youth and 11 advisors came from 11 congregations in eight districts across the denomination. Staffing the event were CCS coordinator Carol Fike, a Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) worker in the Youth and Young Adult Ministry; Becky Ullom, director of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry; Nathan Hosler, advocacy consultant for the Church of the Brethren and the National Council of Churches, along with past advocacy consultant Jordan Blevins; Jonathan Stauffer, BVS worker in the Advocacy and Peace Witness Office in Washington; and Jeremy McAvoy, BVS recruiter.

The group experienced four sessions on different aspects of the theme. Session 1 addressed the "Personal Carbon Footprint" led by Emma and Nancy Sleeth, a mother/daughter team and authors of *Almost Amish, Go Green, Save Green, and It's Easy Being Green*. The Sleeth family have given up a comfortable, wealthy lifestyle to live simply as better stewards of the earth, and shared about the simple things that they are doing in their everyday lives to reduce their personal carbon footprint.

A second session on the "National Carbon Footprint" was led by Tyler Edgar of the National Council of Churches, who works with a variety of environmental issues for the NCC including mountain top removal.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hosted the CCS group for a session in one of its large meeting rooms in a downtown Washington building. Included in this presentation was Dru Ealons, director of the Office of Public Engagement for the EPA; Gina McCarthy, assistant administrator, Office of Air and Radiation; Jerry Lawson of Energy Star; Marcus Sarofim of Climate Science; and Ullom as the Church of the Brethren representative.

"Many of the advisors said that this (session with the EPA) was the best agency presentation that they had ever been a part of," Fike reported. She added that others who met with the CCS group were impressed by the level of understanding among the students. "Tyler (Edgar) was blown away by the questions that our youth asked," she said.

Other CCS activities included viewing the documentary "The Story of Stuff," and exercises to help youth learn about carbon and its effects in items of daily use, such as foods, and how to calculate a personal carbon footprint. Participants also gathered in congregational groups to come up with three new things they will do on their return home, and one



Carol Fike

thing they will encourage their church to do, in order to reduce carbon's effects on the earth's environment.

The event closed with each and every participant visiting and talking with a governmental representative in Washington. The group from California, for example, had breakfast with their senator. Participants from Indiana met with staff of both of their senators, and the group from Illinois and Wisconsin District was able to talk with staff of senators from both states.

Daily worship was an important part of CCS, led by Ullom and Fike, and included an anointing service. Scriptures used for worship included Ezekial 34:17-19, Job 12:7-9, Esther 4:14, Romans 8:18-21, and Matthew 25:25-29.



Carol Fike

*Tyler Edgar of the National Council of Churches (NCC) leads a session on the "National Carbon Footprint" for the Christian Citizenship Seminar group.*

# A reluctant hero

One of the few things I knew going in to see *The Hunger Games* was that it had stayed atypically close to its printed and bound beginnings. I also knew it was going to be violent. And that children were going to be the ones brutalizing each other. In fact, I had heard another film reviewer paint it in such stomach-turning colors that I anticipated emerging from the film feeling the need for spirit-cleansing baptism.



RYAN HARRISON

The worst of it came and it did cause some discomfort. I watched a few scenes through finger-slits or peripherally, having turned my head to soften the empathic blow. By the time the film was over, however, I didn't leave feeling nearly as depressed as expected. Nor as traumatized.

*The Hunger Games* tells the first part of a young woman's story, set in a post-apocalyptic and socially stratified civilization. Twelve "districts" are controlled by an affluent, technologically superior metropolis known as "The Capitol." Each year, two children (one male, one female) between the ages of 12 and 18 are selected by lottery to represent their districts in the Hunger Games, where the goal is simply to stay alive.

The main character is a young woman named Katniss (played by Jennifer Lawrence, nominated for best actress in the 2010 film *Winter's Bone*). At the start of the film, her younger sister's name is drawn, but Katniss offers herself in her sister's place. After being whisked away to The Capitol for training, Katniss learns that her only hope for survival lies in blending her hunting skills (hard-won through a life of stark poverty in what used to be the Appalachians) with the more subtle tactics of politics, popularity, and stage presence.

Long story short, she "wins" by surviving. Along the way, however, she is confronted by situations that reveal the nature of her character and allow the viewer to find some solace in her integrity. This interplay between Katniss and the terrible circumstances she endures is one of the places where I see value in this movie. The other stuff—the mediocre script and acting, the computer graphics, the portrayal of tomorrow's technology, the moments of frenzied

bloodshed—is less novel, less moving, and ultimately less meaningful for me.

My initial reaction was that *The Hunger Games* soundly rebukes the "reality entertainment" industry. Only, rather than doing so by portraying young people mesmerized into idiocy by watching others live out small lives on glowing screens, the film simply goes straight to the point and kills them.

It should come as no surprise that Katniss eventually rises up as something like a Christ-figure. She offers herself in place of her sister. She spends most of the time healing and nurturing others. She befriends a smaller, weaker, younger contestant. She sacrifices her own life to save a dying young man who, after hiding in the ground, arises a few days later. She even publicly honors her oppressed compatriots and demeans those sitting in sanctimonious power and authority over them. Sound familiar?

And yet the one thing about Katniss that I appreciate the most is that she did not *choose* to be the hero which, by the end of the film, she has become. Through a series of events that she did not seek, she continually reinvented herself. To me, it seemed she was persistently impelled to evaluate who she believed herself to be on a fundamental level, and then to act accordingly.

She didn't *want* to offer herself for the Hunger Games, but was compelled to do so out of love. She didn't *want* to become a publically favored contestant, but did due to her willful personality and strength of character. She didn't even *want* to humiliate The Capitol and its entertainment executives by expressing her willingness to die rather than kill a friend. These moments of truth arose—sometimes quickly and dangerously, and other times slowly and with help—and throughout the film, Katniss came out on the other side of each challenge stronger, if also more polarizing.

Watching *The Hunger Games* in this way is like watching a butterfly emerge from its cocoon, albeit a fiercely painful and perilous one. But perhaps that's the most stomach-settling way to think about it: as a story of a compassionate, brave, resilient hero-for-the-people, coming into her own. **M**

Ryan Harrison attends the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren where he started and led monthly Spiritual Cinema Circle gatherings for more than five years. He now teaches "Spiritual Cinema" at the University of La Verne, and is currently pursuing a PsyD degree at the University of the Rockies.

## ABOUT THE MOVIE

**Title:** *The Hunger Games*. **Theatrical release:** March 23, 2012. **Running time:** 142 minutes.

**Director:** Gary Ross. **Screenplay:** Gary Ross, Suzanne Collins, and Billy Ray; based on the novel by Suzanne Collins. **Produced by:** Nina Jacobson and Jon Kilik. **Released by:** Lionsgate. "Often (wrongfully) compared to the *Twilight* Saga, *The Hunger Games* and its subsequent sequels are a far cry from Meyer's angst-y teenage dramas," writes Diana S. Huang, in U.C. Riverside's *Highlander*. "Despite being geared toward young adult readers, Collins's fantasy world holds its own in the literary world by introducing a young hero who forges her own path and possesses uncanny survival instincts. The trilogy also deals with such relevant themes as oppression, war, self-preservation, and draws from mythological influences such as Theseus and the Minotaur."



**The sacramental basis of the peace position**

As I am now 91 years of age, I find the text in MESSENGER becoming increasingly smaller, but I love to “read” the pictures—especially of the last two MESSENGERS. Having been a follower of the unique peace position of the Church of the Brethren for more than 80 years, the March issue brought significant thoughts to my mind. One of those, including the feetwashing service, brought to mind a quote from my seminary history teacher, Floyd Mallott: “The sacramental basis of the peace position is the washing of feet.”

Hopefully, these two MESSENGERS will remind us again of the importance of the peace teaching in the Church of the Brethren. Have we lost conscientious objectors in our church as we tend to abbreviate our love feast? For

me, these life-long years in the church have included three years in BVS, 25 years in the pastorate, attendance at the 1963 Washington March, and numerous other peace marches.

I look forward to “reading” again your pictures and articles in MESSENGER. Thank you for lifting up this historic doctrine.

**D. Eugene Lichty**  
McPherson, Kan.

**Thank you**

As I read through my November MESSENGER, many articles and issues made me want to thank you for the way you dealt with them. That editorial on grace is so greatly needed. Thanks for serving as editor, and may God’s spirit be with you in this work.

**Mary A. Kinsey**  
Mount Morris, Ill.

**The time has come to take off the gloves**

After reading the recent issue of the MESSENGER, we have questions. It is our observation that there are many assumptions being displayed. One that seems apparent is that folks cannot disagree and still be polite and civil. Why is it that things seem to vacillate from one extreme to the other? Is it possible that folks cannot agree yet love each other? Our church family considered the wording of the constitution as written and decided, based upon the Word. We consider the decision made by leaders to be accurate and in line with the Word of the Bible. Does that mean we hate those that don’t agree? The same Word tells us we cannot do that.

After reading that same issue, we agree that the time has come to take

Ecumenical Opportunities at the 2012 Annual Conference • St. Louis, Missouri

**Ecumenical Luncheon**

Tuesday, July 10 at 12:00 noon

***New Fire: Youth and Young Adults and the Ecumenical Movement***

Featuring The Rev. Jennifer Leath, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Leath’s luncheon presentation will focus on the particular challenges of race and ethnicity for the ecumenical movement in the United States and worldwide.

Rev. Leath is a PhD candidate in African American Studies and Religious Studies with an emphasis in Religious Ethics at Yale University. She also serves as the Co-Moderator of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Pentecostal Churches and is a member of ECHOS, the WCC youth commission.

Purchase luncheon tickets online at [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac), or at the meal ticket table at Annual Conference.

**Insight Session**

Rev. Leath will continue the discussion on *Youth and Young Adults and the Ecumenical Movement* at an interactive Insight Session on Tuesday, July 10 at 9:00 p.m.

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Church of the Brethren

off the gloves, agree to disagree, and move on. It is apparent that neither opponent will make the move to change. The fight will go on until death if one will not cease the battle. Our concern is no matter how you cut it, no matter how hard you try not to say it, someone is really wrong. There is no kind way to say that! If we are

considering the bare facts, we see that the Word of God must be our guide to being obedient to Jesus. When any board, any body, any individual, places themselves above the Word, they will ultimately find themselves under that Word. Both parties cannot be correct. We grieve for those tossed to and fro on this issue. We are dealing with peo-

## Pontius' Puddle



## ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

### 2012 TOURS

- 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

- JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 11-20)
- 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)
- HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 24-June 6)
- 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 KRABILL (July 22-31)
- RUSSIA and UKRAINE (September 9-21)
- 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

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ple's eternal life here, and love must be shown to all sides. But in the end we must realize the written, known Word of God must be obeyed and lived out. Our prayer is that the Spirit of the living God extends grace to all as they make their own eternal decision.

**Jim and Cathy Powers**  
Osceola, Mo.

**MESSENGER in every home**

I just read in Wendy McFadden's column that you are now the MESSENGER editor. I write to express my congratulations to MESSENGER and to you, and to the Church of the Brethren.

I have two major concerns, and have had them for years, related to MESSENGER. This letter will focus on one primary issue. The other concern will come sometime in the near future. I have a list of Brethren congregations by districts in 2009 which provides information about those receiving MESSENGER. Of the 999 Brethren con-

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gregations that year, 549 had no MESSENGER subscriptions. I believe that every Brethren congregation should receive the MESSENGER.

Over the years of my pastoral ministry since 1941, I have assisted about

every one of the churches in making sure their members receive MESSENGER in their homes. I continue to believe that every Brethren home should receive the MESSENGER.

I recommend that MESSENGER staff develop plans for getting MESSENGER used in every church home. A church usually gets done, by the grace of God, what it sets out to do.

**Olden D. Mitchell**  
North Manchester, Ind.

institutions, and the work appears to indicate that authoritarianism is less of an inherited personality trait and much more of a learned trait. But once the attitudes surrounding authoritarianism are entrenched, it is difficult to root them out. Work done in England suggests that the brains of such people have been hardwired during development because their fear centers in their amygdalas are much larger than in people who don't buy into the authoritarian attitudes.

Something else to consider is what several people from Gloria Steinem to Susan B. Anthony to Robert Heinlein to Richard F. Burton to Mark Twain to Baruch Spinoza to Oscar Wilde to Lin Yutang to Voltaire and many more have suggested through the ages, i.e., a person's god hates the same things that the person hates. In other words, people use religion to justify their own attitudes. They don't adjust their attitudes to their religion. You can publish as many articles about tolerance and Jesus' love for everyone as you want, and you will still get letters from people who wonder why the BMC is allowed to have a stand at the Annual Conference. Although you have to try to help those who are consumed by hate, sometimes a more productive use of resources is to prevent young people from growing up hating.

**Daniel K. Miller**  
Monterrey, N.L., Mexico

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### The root of the discord

Larry Ulrich's article about how the neo-cons have politicized religion is spot on. I think he might have emphasized more the problem of authoritarianism, however, because from what I read and see, this seems to be the root of the discord. There is a very strong correlation between being authoritarian and being a right wing religionist, i.e., one who depends on rules rather than values to determine behavior. This work has been done at the University of Manitoba and the University of Virginia as well as other

#### Chief Executive Officer Cross Keys Village

Retirement community in New Oxford, PA seeks CEO to lead 900 resident campus. Contact Caryn Howell with MHS Alliance: 574-537-8736 or Caryn@StiffneyGroup.com.

### CLASSIFIED ADS

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**TRAVEL WITH A CHRISTIAN GROUP.** Rose Bowl Parade and Hawaii (Dec 31, 2012-Jan 13, 2013). Central Europe, including Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, Krakow, Auschwitz concentration camp (September 5-16, 2012). For information please write to J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Bear Creek Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or email kreiderk@etown.edu.

**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@pbroadband.net.

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-523-8059 ext. 520; [jclements@brethren.org](mailto:jclements@brethren.org). Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

## New Members

### Antelope Park, Lincoln, Neb.:

John Andrews, Miriam Kawa-Andrews, Aidan Andrews, Misha Estrada, Mikaelie Palu, Carol Reed

### Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio:

Sandy Hoskins, Phil Reynolds, Jr., Clara Reynolds

### Drexel Hill, Pa.: Rebecca Johnson

**Frederick, Md.:** Dennis Staley, Jane Staley, Jim Stevens, Paul Bream, Mary Ann Griffith, Amanda Staley, Brandy Main, Laura Leary, Katy Hallock, Jenna Hallock, Kimberly Hood, Raylee Peterson, Allie Peterson, Terry Thompson, Ron Holter, Kathy Holter, Adam Holter, Carrie Holter, Mike Smith, Jennifer Murrell, Eric Murrell, Lydia Mitchell, Bill Mitchell, Joyce Grossnickle, Tina Hiden, Debbie Krompegal, Jennifer Ginsburg

### Freeport, Ill.:

Jill Conley, Josh Graf, Charlotte Friend, Jessica Friend, Cole Miller

### Grottoes, Va.:

Sydney Betts, Wendy McGin, Ed Roach, Linda Roach

### Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md.:

Terry Wetzal, Joseph Cline, Ian D. Pockock, Gladys E. Hall

### Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind.:

Linda Kauffman

### Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa.:

Jim Park, Gina Park, Shane Mitchell, Hannah Greenleaf, Kay Wright, Mardi Lescher

### Roaring Spring, Pa.:

Adam Lanzenderfer, Cortney Lanzenderfer, Henry Meetze, Mary Ann Meetze, Jon Reilly, Jr., Dawn Reilly, Keara Reilly

### Springfield, Ore.:

Opey Freedle

### Uniontown, Pa.:

Miranda Novak, Stephen Novak

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Anderson, Donald and Lucinda, Falfurrias, Texas, 50**

**Bryant, Kenneth and Ruby, Goshen, Ind., 75**

**Ferguson, Tom and Dot, Smithsburg, Md., 50**

**Finnell, James and Marcella, Wabash, Ind., 50**

**Hannah, Lloyd and Peggy, Blue Ridge, Va., 55**

**Heimbach, Alton and Marie, New Cumberland, Pa., 60**

**Hess, Gerald and Carol, Lititz, Pa., 55**

**Kreps, John and Laurale, Wabash, Ind., 50**

**Little, Carl and Rita, Westminster, Md., 55**

**Lowry, James and Joan, Falfurrias, Texas, 50**

**Lyle, Tommy and Eunice, Roanoke, Va., 55**

**Miller, Delbert and Eva, Goshen, Ind., 55**

**Reese, Sam and Mildred, Hagerstown, Md., 65**

**Stine, Rick and Nancy, Frederick, Md., 60**

**Warfield, Roland and Dorothy, Frederick, Md., 65**

**Wampler, Dale and Eva, Huntingdon, Pa., 50**

**Wright, Owen and Pat, Cottage Grove, Ore., 55**

## Deaths

**Bailey, Sarah R., 96, Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 31**

**Banwart, Lois Colwell, 90, Adel, Iowa, March 15**

**Barrick, Claude, Jr., 81, Keyser, W.Va., Feb. 22**

**Bever, Marcella, 95, Wabash, Ind., March 11**

**Briggs, Walter M., 61, Monrovia, Md., Oct. 22**

**Bross, Rosalie, 88, Lebanon, Pa., March 14**

**Brougher, Olin, 96, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 11**

**Brumbaugh, Richard, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 27**

**Bryant, Cecil Ray, 85, Galax, Va., Jan. 24**

**Burket, Mildred, 94, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 1**

**Castle, Melvin Lee, 60, Braddock Heights, Md., Nov. 15**

**Caudell, Mack A., Sr., 87,**

Sparta, N.C., Feb. 23

**Delawder, Edna, 87, Timberville, Va., Feb. 8**

**Dews, William, 79, North Canton, Ohio, Feb. 3**

**Dilling, Lois, 85, Orlando, Fla., Jan. 7**

**Double, Hilda, 85, Lancaster Pa., Feb. 9**

**Ellsworth, Bessie, 89, Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 23**

**Emrick, Ernestine Hoff, 95, La Verne, Calif., Feb. 24**

**Eppley, Dorothy E., 88, Davidsville, Pa., Feb. 5**

**Fearins, Ruth, 90, Denton, Md., March 7**

**Flickinger, Glenda Jane, 90, Walkersville, Md., Dec. 5**

**Forney, Hilda, 90, Frederick, Md., Nov. 1**

**Fortney, Robert, 94, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 1**

**Fouche, Gage M., 20, Brunswick, Md., Oct. 14**

**Friel, Gladys Annette, 74, Frederick, Md., Sept. 26**

**Fritz, Helen A., 87, New Windsor, Md., Feb. 23**

**Garrison, Arthur J., 93, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 24**

**Gold, Mary A., 82, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 11**

**Gray, Donna Sue Amery, 65, Pittsburg, Mo., March 8**

**Graybill, Dorothy Faye, 79, Troutville, Va., March 9**

**Hafer, Gerald, 63, Lebanon, Pa., March 4**

**Harrell, Lowell, 85, Wabash, Ind., Aug. 26**

**Harshman, Marie Flora, 84, Frederick, Md., Dec. 6**

**Hauger, Doris, 88, Freeport, Ill., Feb. 26**

**Heisey, Enos B., 89, Lancaster, Pa., March 5**

**Hope, Ethelda, 62, Canfield, Ohio, Nov. 19**

**Horst, Wanda, 88, Columbiana, Ohio, Feb. 9**

**Hotchkiss, William John, 92, Broadway, Va., March 11**

**Keefer-Hall, Anne, 39, East Berlin, Pa., Sept. 29**

**Keyser, Nancy, 85, Oaks, Pa., Feb. 8**

**Kimmel, Lois E., 67, Tyrone, Pa., Feb. 29**

**Knieriem, Dorothy B., 86, Orlando, Fla., Nov. 7**

**Kough, Arlene, 90, McPherson, Kan., Feb. 15**

**Leonard, Lillian, 85, Martinsburg, Pa., March 16**

**Mansfield, John, 84, Salem, Ohio, Dec. 31**

**Martin, Robert E., 85, Toledo, Ohio, Feb. 28**

**Medinger, Irma, 72, Walkersville, Md., Oct. 13**

**Mellinger, Florence G., 92, Quarryville, Pa., Feb. 15**

**Messinger, Kermit, 79, East Berlin, Pa., Nov. 7**

**Miller, Charlie O., 78, Buckeystown, Md., July 5**

**Miller, Dorothy Irene, 86, Richmond, Va., March 9**

**Newman, Richard T., 68, Damascus, Md., Aug. 11**

**Ort, Betty, 79, Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 21**

**Phillips, Carol Lee, 72, Waynesboro, Va., March 4**

**Raspberry, Frances, 96, Boonsboro, Md., Dec. 20**

**Reasy, Janet, 88, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Feb. 7**

**Remsburg, Stanley, 71, Jefferson, Md., Aug. 22**

**Renoll, Mabel, 94, East Berlin, Pa., Dec. 17**

**Rippeon, John W., Jr., 60, Frederick, Md., Dec. 16**

**Roderick, Ruby V., 98, Frederick, Md., Oct. 1**

**Rucker, Harlie A., 90, Toledo, Ohio, March 6**

**Saylor, Daniel P., 50, Walkersville, Md., Nov. 30**

**Sexton, Philip L., 73, Sparta, N.C., Jan. 24**

**Shaffer, Myron, 92, Windber, Pa., Feb. 15**

**Shelly, Robert, 91, Lansdale, Pa., March 18**

**Shepherd, J. Vance, 85, Portland, Ore., Feb. 28**

**Simpson, Leon G., 87, Maumee, Ohio, Aug. 17**

**Stoner, A. Parepa, 85, Union Bridge, Md., Sept. 27**

**Thim, Charlotte, 82, Harleysville, Pa., Feb. 25**

**Veale, Donna, 85, Modesto, Calif., Feb. 22**

**Walters, Dean, 83, Roaring Spring, Pa., Feb. 17**

**Wareham, Pauline, 99, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 17**

**Warren, Joyce, 68, East Berlin, Pa., Jan. 23**

**Wetzel, Carolyn, 95, Dillsburg, Pa., Feb. 7**

**Wetzel, Mary Jane, 78, Union Bridge, Md., Sept. 23**

**Whyte, Craig Lee, 40, Frederick, Md., Nov. 15**

**Wile, Nancy Weibly, 75, Ronks, Pa., March 5**

## Licensings

**Hall, Edward W., Jr., Southeastern Dist. (Peak Creek, Laurel Springs, N.C.), March 18**

**Owen, Patricia L., Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.), March 4**

**Rittle, Matthew, Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Franklin Grove, Ill.), Jan. 15**

## Ordinations

**Bowers, Dale P., Shen. Dist. (Community Mission, Woodstock, Va.), March 18**

**Crowder, C. Todd, Shen. Dist. (Wakeman's Grove, Edinburg, Va.), Feb. 25**

**Prater, Jonathan A., Shen. Dist. (Mount Zion, Linville, Va.), March 9**

**Rudy, Daniel L., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md.), Feb. 19**

**Smith, P. Lee, Shen. Dist. (Greenmount, Harrisonburg, Va.), Nov. 13**

**Yowell, Richard H., Shen. Dist. (Cedar Run, Broadway, Va.), March 18**

## Placements

**Glasscock, John, pastor, Iowa River, Marshalltown, Iowa, March 12**

**Gunn, Jody Ellingson, from pastor of special ministries, Easton, Md., to chaplain, Talbot Hospice Foundation, Easton, Md., March 31**

**Hall, Edward W., Jr., pastor, Peak Creek, Laurel Springs, N.C., March 18**

**Mishler, Cheryl Jean, from associate pastor, Topeka, Kan., to pastor, Trinity, Sabetha, Kan., Feb. 12**

**Neff, John N., from pastor, Grottoes, Va., to pastor, Lake Side, Moneta, Va., March 1**

**Smith, John C., pastor, Pleasant Grove, Bakersville, N.C., March 25**

**Snyder, Joel, pastor, Valley Point, Orbisonia, Pa., March 18**

# The awkward phase

**M**aybe we're just going through an awkward phase.

Consider this—from time to time, we Brethren can be a tad immature. It seems we just can't help ourselves. But there may be a scientific reason for this. Thankfully, there also may be a way for us to get through it.

As a denomination, we just turned 300. Compared with religions that have been around a millennium or more, we're barely an adolescent. Next to them—with their pomp and ceremony, their robes and incense—we're the self-conscious kid at the prom with braces, acne, and a bad suit. No wonder we can be so boneheaded sometimes.



RANDY MILLER  
MESSENGER Editor

But let's not be too hard on ourselves. After all, since we are just entering puberty (in church years) we're bound to be off our game occasionally. As recent scientific findings show, our collective frontal lobe is likely not yet fully developed.

According to "The adolescent brain—why teenagers think and act differently," at [edinformatics.com](http://edinformatics.com), brain development happens over a long period of time, and maturation of the frontal lobe—which is responsible for our reasoning and judgment—takes the longest. "For many years it was thought that brain development was set at a fairly early age. By the time teen years were reached

Ballroom dancing.

Ballroom dancing is a requirement for fifth graders at 200 New York public schools. The hope is that it will help cultivate some manners and respect in these kids.

"What do they learn face to face that they wouldn't learn sitting next to each other in the classroom?" NBC News reporter Anne Thompson asked Dancing Classrooms founder Pierre Dulaine for a "Making a Difference" segment for NBC Nightly News.

"You just said it," he replied. "Face to face, and having to look at each other."

We may not be kicking up our heels at Annual Conference in St. Louis this summer (although many Conference events will be held in ballrooms . . .), but delegates *will* have to face each other as they sit at round tables during business sessions—an innovation encouraged by moderator Tim Harvey to foster communication.

The late American author Kurt Vonnegut, speaking to a group of university students about writing, once said, "A writer can't be self-centered. To be a good writer, you have to learn how to be a good date. Is the other person having a good time? Because if they aren't, they won't keep reading." The same could be said about dancing. You have to pay attention to your partner; you have to work together. Vonnegut added, "Writing well is a grace—it is a demonstration of being civilized. If you learn to write it will make you a more graceful person."

According to Brooklyn PS 160 Elementary School princi-

## IF BALLROOM DANCING CAN HELP INSTILL CIVILITY AND RESPECT IN FIFTH GRADERS—WHOSE BRAINS ARE EVEN LESS FULLY DEVELOPED THAN A TEENAGER'S—THEN MAYBE THERE'S HOPE FOR US.

the brain was thought to be largely finished. However, scientists doing cutting-edge research using magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, have mapped the brain from early childhood into adulthood and found data contrary to these beliefs. It now appears the brain continues to change into the early 20s with the frontal lobes, responsible for reasoning and problem solving, developing last."

No wonder we sometimes come across to the rest of the world—and even to one another—as moody, belligerent teenagers. That's what we are!

We could ask the rest of the world to be patient with us for a few centuries while we work out the kinks. But there just might be a way for us to become more graceful even now, while we're still fumbling for the Clearasil. How?

pal Margaret Rouseau, dancing breaks down barriers. "On that dance floor, we're all the same, so we're all one community," Rouseau explained to Thompson, "and I think that's really important."

It may not happen overnight, or even over Conference. But maybe it can begin if we simply go through the motions.

"Is it hard to hold a girl?" Thompson asked fifth grader Kevin Lin.

"After a while, you'll get used to it," Lin replied.

If ballroom dancing can help instill civility and respect in fifth graders—whose brains are even less fully developed than a teenager's—then maybe there's hope for us.

Being graceful and civilized—after a while, maybe we'll get used to it. 

**COMING IN JUNE:** A profile of moderator Tim Harvey, fostering peace in Nigeria, Bible study, media review, reflections, letters, and more.

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Student athletes and President Devorah Lieberman (right), worked together to build a house for Habitat for Humanity.



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