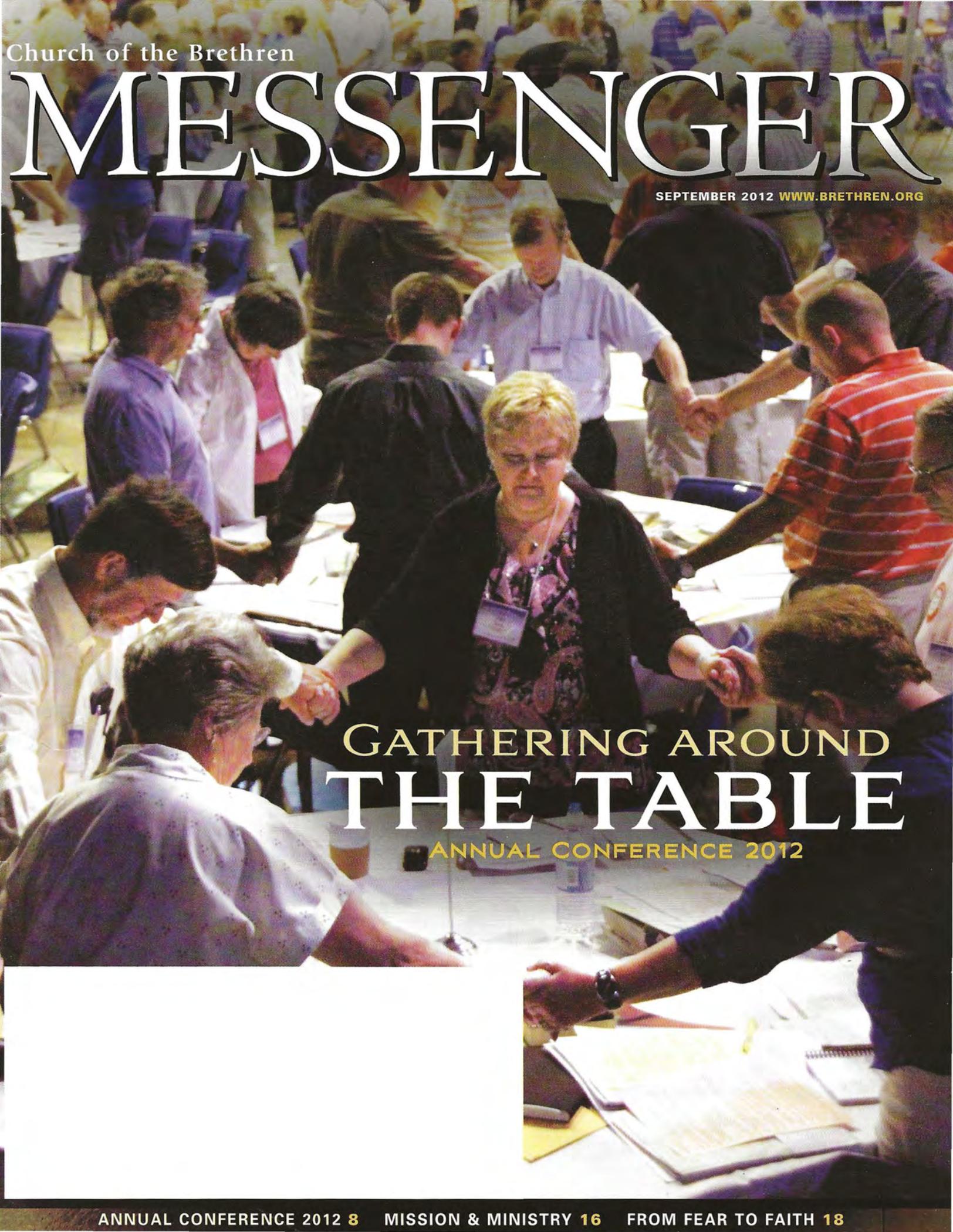


Church of the Brethren

# MESSENGER

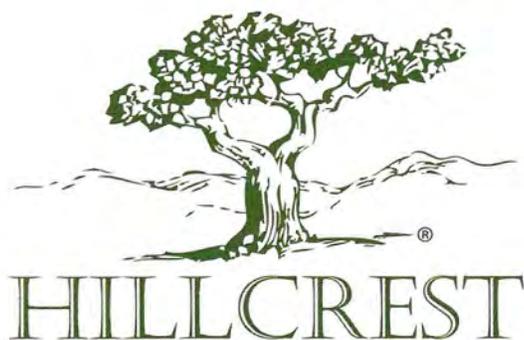
SEPTEMBER 2012 [WWW.BRETHREN.ORG](http://WWW.BRETHREN.ORG)



## GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

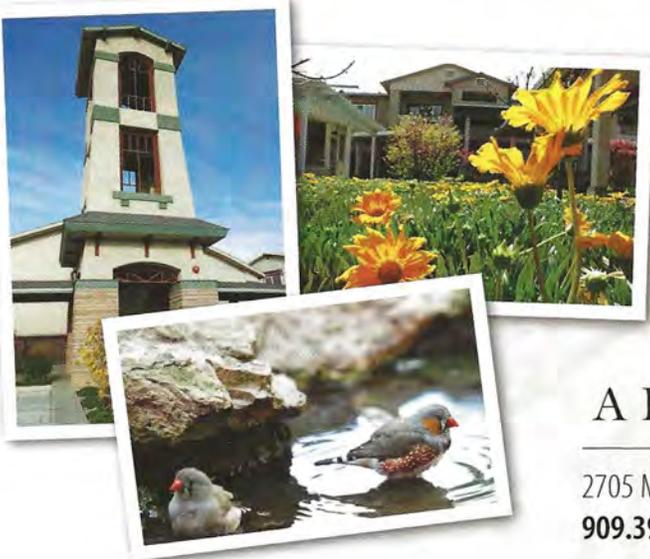
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012

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Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

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

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## 8 Table talk

While temperatures soared above the century mark at the beginning of Annual Conference in St. Louis this summer, discussion among delegates and others gathered inside the America’s Center Convention Hall was far less heated this year than at previous Conferences. Find out how the tables may have turned for the Church of the Brethren.

## 16 Optimistic despite challenges

At their recent meeting, members of the Church of the Brethren’s Mission and Ministry Board expressed cautious optimism about possibilities for growth in the denomination. “The Strategic Plan for the denomination that the staff has presented is going in the direction we need to go,” said board member Andy Hamilton. “I’m hopeful.”

## 18 From fear to faith—taking part in God’s ongoing work

Faith and fear are intertwined in Mary’s reaction to the news that she has been chosen to bear God’s son. While the familiar passage in Luke—often referred to as the Magnificat—is most often visited at Christmas, Joshua Brockway suggests it carries a relevant message for us regardless of where we are on the calendar.

**ONTHECOVER** Annual Conference delegates sat around tables and talked over issues face to face, marking a departure from the traditional theater-style seating. While some expressed anxiety initially, by the end of Conference the consensus was that it had been a success. While there wasn’t always agreement, there was recognition of common ground. Before leaving St. Louis, many could be seen exchanging phone numbers and e-mail addresses. *Cover photo by Regina Holmes.*



Regina Holmes



Glenn Reigel

**A**mong the flotsam and jetsam carried by the fast-flowing Facebook river is a series of photos of items that used to be commonplace but are no longer in use. You're supposed to click "like" if you recognize what it is. So, for example, you may see an old metal ice cube tray with the lever that loosens the ice cubes, or an 8-track tape, or a roller skate key.

I don't have any sentimental feelings for metal ice cube trays, but I do wish I'd saved one black rotary phone from years gone by. Who thinks of that when the family is happily buying the new push-button variety? The item I really wish I'd saved, though, is my mother's Royal manual typewriter, which I gave away years ago for some good cause.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

I thought of typewriters this year in St. Louis. It was when the Brethren were last in St. Louis, in 1988, that computers were first used at an Annual Conference—in the press room. Unfortunately, the rented set-up didn't work perfectly and the vendor promptly went on holiday for the Fourth of July weekend. But fortunately, the trusty IBM Selectric typewriter saved the day.

In 1989 Messenger bought a computer system, and before long the publishing house had gotten computers too. A few years later Brethren Press bought a new piece of hardware that would be able to store an entire gigabyte of data; now an eight-gigabyte flash drive is on sale for \$6.

While the technological advances on the development and production side are constant, it's more difficult to set the course on the receiving end. There's no question that some readers of MESSENGER and Brethren Press resources would like to receive their content on e-readers and tablets. Our research shows, though, that in general the Brethren don't match the rest of the US population when it comes to embracing technology. A higher percentage want materials on paper. Many do not have a high-speed Internet connection. More than half our congregations do not have an e-mail address.

It would be ideal to meet the needs of readers at all points along the technological spectrum, though limited time and resources force choices. What about you? Would you rather read MESSENGER in digital form? If so, what device are you using? Would you pay the same amount as the print subscription? Would you want access to both print and digital formats? Tell us at [messenger@brethren.org](mailto:messenger@brethren.org).

Or if you're a paper person, write to us at Messenger, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

*Wendy McFadden*

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A free study guide for each issue of MESSENGER is available at this site, along with other information.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © September 2012, Church of the Brethren.

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 10 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694.



Printed on recycled paper  
(20% post consumer)

# A race to forgiveness

Nearly 50 members and friends of South Waterloo (Iowa) Church of the Brethren participated in the Dunkerton 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention on June 16. From babies to senior citizens, from avid runners to entire families, the group supported an event that held special meaning for the Northern Plains District congregation.

Grief propelled the group to participate. Last October a member of the congregation chose to end his life, sending shock and grief throughout the church. Being a part of the run/walk provided an opportunity for members to move forward by talking and breaking the stigma that silences many families who lose a loved one to suicide.

"I practiced for months, pushing my body into more athletic condition, sometimes running or walking 14 to 16 miles during a week," said Kris Klingaman. It was her cousin's death that served as the impetus for the 47 members of the South Waterloo congregation to participate in the event. "As a 55-year-old, I had some days that were painful and tiring. But I wanted to run the race for Bill, for the memories I'll never get to make with him, for the many bear hugs now missing, for his sweet smile that I'll never see again."



For Klingaman, the race was also about forgiveness. "I felt God telling me to forgive. I needed to forgive, just as God had forgiven; forgiving him for the sudden way he left us, forgiving him for the hurt and pain he caused us, forgiving him because he will not be here on this earth anymore for us."

As participants gathered for the event, an organizer shared some statistics about suicide in America. "More people die by suicide than by AIDS each year in this country," he told the crowd. "Yet very few people are aware of this, or that there is help when you need it."

Writing in the church newsletter about the race, Klingaman wrote, "I crossed the finish line, tears in my eyes and forgiveness in my heart. I love my cousin Bill, and together with God's blessing, we won a third place medal, a medal that is my proud symbol of what Bill and I achieved on the race to forgiveness."

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



## YOU SAID IT

**"Sometimes we are tempted to give up on stuff. Just pull it down and replace it with something new. Sometimes we need reminders that lots of life is worth saving and bringing back to health. Sometimes we even need to rediscover this in the church."**

—Beth Sollenberger, district executive, South/Central Indiana

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 38,595

Dollars received in Annual Conference offerings this summer in St. Louis

# Helping hands in Honduras

The Republic of Honduras was already the poorest country in Central America even before Hurricane Mitch swept through the land in late 1998, destroying one third of the highway structure, cutting off cities from resources, and destroying thousands of homes. CWS (Church World Service), after assessing the damage, took several groups down to rebuild 35 houses near the south Nicaraguan border.

Bill Hare, of Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, began working there in 2000 through CWS to help build homes. He soon realized, aside from those affected by the hurricane, some 65 percent of the population need-

ed good homes to live in. Most lived in crude wooden shacks built from whatever material they could find. In 2001 he went back to build more homes as part of what has now become an ongoing effort.

Over the years the projects have continued to grow. Groups are organized in the US by Bill to go to Honduras in January. In addition to houses, they have built a school (2004) and rehabbed a clinic (2006). That is when Bill met Hernan Lopez who founded Christian Solidarity Program to further organize the work for the people. Hernan, known as Ernie, is instrumental in organizing the local villages to assess their needs. Those with the greatest needs are helped first.

Villagers come with their requests for help. Then all the local people gather the raw materials to use in the projects. By the time the US group lands in Honduras, everything is ready. Cement blocks have been made for the buildings and local masons have been hired to assemble the homes. Bill's group works alongside the local people to construct these homes. There are jobs for everyone: easy, medium, and hard. Each home, when completed, is 18 feet square, with a cement floor, a metal roof, one door, and one window.

During the projects, everyone sleeps on cots in one room, often at a local school. Bathing is done with a five-gallon pail and a dipper. Food is prepared over an open fire by the excellent local cooks. A typical meal might consist of scrambled eggs, oatmeal with cinnamon, green beans, rice and beans or corn tortillas, and is served to as many as 40 people. The richness of fellowship with the people is its own reward.

Plans for the eight-day trip in January are now underway. For information, contact Bill Hare at (815) 946-4268.—**Patricia Cole Stauffer**



## REMEMBERED

**Philip West**, a son of Heifer International founder Dan West, passed away June 21. He and his twin Larry were born Oct. 4, 1938, in Goshen, Ind., to Dan and Lucille West. He became one of the "seagoing cowboys" who cared for heifer cows en route to farmers struggling to recover from World War II, traveling to Japan where he remained to study at the International Christian University in Tokyo. The experience ignited a love of east Asia that would become his life's work.

West graduated from Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., in 1960 and served as a conscientious

objector teaching English for two years in Poland with Brethren Volunteer Service. By 1971 he had earned a doctorate from Harvard University in modern Chinese history and East Asian languages.

West and his wife, Young-ee Cho, moved to Missoula, Mont., in 1988 when he became Mansfield Professor of Modern Asian Affairs and then directed the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center. His projects focused on the human experience of American wars in Asia, the Korean War in particular, creating opportunities for dialogue and healing between former enemies. His book, *Yenching University*

and *Sino-Western Relations, 1916-1952* (Harvard University Press, 1976) was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. In 2011, he received an Alumni Honor Award from Manchester College.

**Wolfgang Klaus Juergen Spreen**, 67, a former member of the staff of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., most recently living in Middleburg, Fla., died July 17. He was a native of Germany and moved to the US in 1998 to reside in Maryland. He worked with the Church of the Brethren in New Windsor as assistant to the general secretary and supporting other program areas until 2009.



## A little miracle in Hollansburg

In the village of Hollansburg, Ohio, volunteers from local churches are creating miracles for struggling children and families. On Mondays and Wednesdays during the summer, when school is not in session, children and families come to the Hollansburg Community Center to receive a free hot meal.

The Hollansburg Summer Lunch Program, now in its second year, sees an average of 30 people on Mondays and 40 on Wednesdays, but the numbers are growing as the word spreads. Members of Cedar Grove Church the Brethren and Beech Grove Church of the Brethren, both part of the Southern Ohio District, help organize and run the program.

Studies show that 45 percent of children living in Ohio are eligible for either free lunches or reduced-price lunches during the school year. Ohio is among the top 10 states deemed food insecure. Food security refers to the ability of all members of a household to have access to enough food for a fit, healthy, and active lifestyle. Minimum food security includes a ready availability of nutritionally safe and adequate foods. It also includes an assured ability to acquire food items in an acceptable manner. Stealing, scavenging, and relying on emergency food supplies are not considered acceptable. More than 16 percent of Ohio households are food insecure.

The Hollansburg Lunch Program is helping put a dent in those percentages, and the people of Hollansburg are grateful for the impact the program is having. The meal served consists of a main entrée,

such as a hamburger, a side item such as tater tots, a fruit or vegetable, a dessert such as a brownie or pudding, and a glass of milk or water. Each person gets one plate, and if there is enough for seconds, they can have seconds. No child leaves the Hollansburg Community Center, where the lunch program is hosted, hungry.

Recently, a large sum of money was donated to the lunch program and, wondering what to do with it, Becky Devor and pastor Tony Price of Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren had an idea. The idea, which went into effect the second week of June, was to provide the children and families with a third meal for the week. This third meal would consist of a main course such as macaroni and cheese, a fruit such as applesauce, and a snack such as mini Oreos. Each child present receives a bag with each item to take home. In addition to these individual items, there is something called a family item. Ranging from a large box of cereal to rice, each family represented at the lunch program receives one for the entire family to utilize. These food bags are sent home every Wednesday.

Many local businesses and organizations have helped with the lunch program by donating funds or food. Without this support, the lunch program would not be able to reach as many families and children.

—Erik Brummett is a student at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind. He served an internship this summer at Cedar Grove (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. As part of his internship, he volunteered at the Hollansburg Lunch Program.

### LANDMARKS & LAURELS

**Hostetler Church of the Brethren** in Meyersdale, Pa., celebrates its 200th year as a congregation on Sept. 9. Festivities will include morning Sunday school and worship, an afternoon service at 2 p.m., music by members and former members, recognition of those who have been called into ministry by the congregation, and time for sharing.

**Mt. Bethel Church of the Brethren** in Dayton, Va.—now in the midst of its centennial celebration—is planning special events each month culminating in a final celebration on Oct. 21. A centennial cookbook is being produced with recipes from across the generations.

On June 10, **Nanty Glo (Pa.) Church of the Brethren** celebrated its 90th anniversary.

**The youth group at Pine Grove Church of the Brethren** in West Marva District raised \$4,542.49 for World Vision during a recent lock in. During the lock in, the group also completed a community project of staining the church playground equipment.

**Bermudian Church of the Brethren** in East Berlin, Pa., held a second annual “Drive Your Tractor to Church Sunday” and Farm Family Blessing on July 1. The York First Church’s newsletter noted the event, quoting pastor Larry Dentler: “Both services were full, a record number of tractors, many visitors—most important of all we had the privilege to ask God’s special blessing upon our hard working farm families!”

**Marking its 50th anniversary (1962-2012) Brethren Colleges Abroad** is inviting alumni to share memories at an online memory book. Go to [www.bcstudyabroad.org/memorybook](http://www.bcstudyabroad.org/memorybook). The organization held a celebration with former students and staff on June 8 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

# Are others more 'Brethren' than we are?

**O**ne of the phrases that I have used when there are those coming to join the prestigious ranks of the Brethren is, "Everyone is Brethren, they just don't know it yet!" The comment, usually met with a chuckle, is truly reflective of what I believe about our denomination, our values, and our theology.

Over the past 15 years or so, I have noticed a dramatic shift in mainstream theology and perspective toward the values we have traditionally held in the Church of the Brethren. These include an emphasis on peace and justice issues, a focus on community, and a desire to serve others. It almost seems as if these "Brethren" values have been put

into practice more effectively by other denominations who appear more willing to take a stand on these issues than we are. Could this be making our unique story not so unique anymore, leading to some confusion over what it means to be Brethren? In other words, are others seeing our story and our message and agreeing with it? Yes! But the difference seems to be that they are actually doing something about it!

For me, it really does not matter if people actually become Brethren or not as long as they find a Christ-centered, Bible-believing community in which to live out their faith. Nevertheless, when we have an amazing story to tell and we let others tell it for us, well, that just



BRIAN MESSLER

level—the point where we stand with community members at soccer games, beef roasts, and other events. And it is there, at the community level, that I believe we could do more to share the essence of who we are.

More and more denominations are participating in love feasts, more people are reaching out to their neighbors, and more churches are sharing a message of love to their communities. Then I look at many (not all) of our own denomination's churches who keep to themselves, who may do little things here and there yet seem reluctant to fully embrace their communities, and I think that many other churches are reaching out in Christ's love better than we are right now.

Recently I have been having discussions about unconditional love, a love that does not expect anything in return. Many believe that humans cannot live out unconditional love. Hogwash! The problem is, we seem to have forgotten how, and we now put conditions on our love: I will love you if you change your ways; I will love you if you do something for me; I will love you if you come to my church; I will love you if you follow my way of thinking. Sadly, I think many of us in the Church of the Brethren have fallen into this un-Christ-like, conditional love, and this has detracted from our essence as Brethren. When we begin to love our communities—and each other—without expecting anything in return, that is when the doors of the church will swing wide open and people will be compelled, no matter where they are in their faith journey, to come inside and live a life founded in a rich heritage called Church of the Brethren.

**WHEN WE BEGIN TO LOVE OUR COMMUNITIES—AND EACH OTHER—WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING IN RETURN, THAT IS WHEN THE DOORS OF THE CHURCH WILL SWING WIDE OPEN.**

frustrates me. Our first goal should be to share the hope revealed through Christ alone. And each Christ-centered denomination chooses to live that out through the heritage that they have come from.

Our denominational staff and representatives have done an amazing job representing us nationally and globally, espousing the message of our beloved denomination at a host of events where people look to us for guidance on the aforementioned theological stances. They also provide wonderful resources for individual congregations. However, it seems that their efforts are sometimes lost at the local

I pray that everyone in this world can love like this, unconditionally. I pray that we may be a bold people, like our forebears, in proclaiming our rich heritage to our communities. Brothers and sisters—and I mean that term of endearment to my core—I pray that we may be able to once again show by word and deed what it means to be "Brethren." Because everyone wants to be Brethren, they just don't know it yet. 

Brian Messler is associate pastor for worship and witness at Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren, and a member of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board.

# “The best people I’ve known in my life have been in the Church of the Brethren.”

—Kerby Lauderdale, quoted by Jim Lehman during his address at the Voices for an Open Spirit dinner at Annual Conference in St. Louis. Lauderdale is pastor of Peace Church of the Brethren in Portland, Ore.

“I fear that sometimes we’re more comfortable on the judgment seat than we are on the mercy seat.”

—Bob Kettering, pastor of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, speaking at the Brethren Revival Fellowship dinner at Annual Conference in St. Louis

“The Higgs Boson walks into a Catholic Church. Priest says ‘What are you doing here?’ HB says ‘You can’t have mass without me.’”

—A tweet from Brian Malow, who calls himself the Science Comedian, that Malow coined in 2009 but is making the rounds these days in the wake of the Higgs Boson discovery

“War will exist until the distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige as the warrior does today.”

—US President John F. Kennedy

“As the fellowship increases at the tables, we may soon be having full-blown covered-dish picnics at each table.”

—from an Annual Conference evaluation form

“One key thing about Christianity is that it requires voluntary acceptance of faith. If someone says he’s a Christian, it is a sign of Christianity in and of itself.”

—Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), in an interview with *Christianity Today* on why it’s unfair for people to question President Obama’s faith

“We believe every human being to be ultimately a pilgrim in search of truth, goodness, and the fulfillment of potential.”

—Roman Catholic Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, England, welcoming athletes to the 2012 Games

➔ Americans’ confidence in organized religion which has slowly but steadily declined since the 1970s, slipped to a new low in the latest survey, the Gallup Organization reported. Today only 44 percent of Americans have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in “the church or organized religion,” Gallup said. It was 68 percent in the mid-1970s.

➔ The World Council of Churches (WCC) calls on churches and congregations around the world to observe an **International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21**. The day coincides with the International Day of Peace initiated by the United Nations. The participants are especially invited to pray and act together for a just peace in communities, nations, and the world. Praying for Ceasefire is the theme

adopted this year by On Earth Peace. “For some people, praying for ceasefire will mean praying for a break in armed conflict. For others, a ceasefire will mean ending conflict in their community, workplace, church, or family,” said **Matt Guynn of On Earth Peace**.

➔ While charitable donations from individuals in America rose nearly 4 percent overall in 2011, **donations to houses of worship and other religious bodies dropped** by 1.7 percent—a decrease for the second year in a row. A report compiled by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy shows that individual Americans gave nearly \$218 billion last year, \$96 billion of which went to religious organizations.



## JUST FOR FUN: WORDFIND

**HARVEST SEASON** “I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). In the puzzle below, find the following things that grow from seeds. Answers may be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, forwards or backwards.

- |            |         |          |       |        |
|------------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| TOMATO     | PUMPKIN | CARROT   | BEET  | OKRA   |
| WATERMELON | FLOWER  | CORN     | PEA   | SQUASH |
| TREE       | GRAPE   | CUCUMBER | BERRY |        |
|            | MUSTARD | APPLE    | WHEAT |        |

Q	D	R	A	T	S	U	M	C	Z	S
T	S	P	A	T	R	I	C	O	V	E
O	E	Q	H	O	S	B	I	R	T	B
M	K	P	U	M	P	K	I	N	D	E
A	C	R	M	A	E	T	R	E	E	E
T	A	L	A	G	S	E	B	B	E	T
O	T	E	N	M	W	H	E	P	L	H
R	P	A	T	O	R	R	A	C	L	A
E	R	U	L	A	R	R	N	M	P	R
O	S	F	D	Y	G	W	H	E	A	T
C	A	R	E	B	M	U	C	U	C	E
W	A	T	E	R	M	E	L	O	N	P



Glenn Ringel

*Continuing  
the work  
of Jesus*

# BRETHREN GATHER AROUND THE

## Delegate seating at round tables facilitates face-to-face conversation, prayer

*"Watching you all hold hands around the tables and pray is one of the most beautiful things I have seen in my life," said Annual Conference moderator Tim Harvey to the delegate body after one morning's devotions during the 2012 Conference, held July 7-11 in St. Louis, Mo.*

**T**he delegates, who were seated at round tables, had been asked to pray together with their table groups. This is the first year in recent memory that the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference has used table groups for face-to-face discussion, giving feedback on items of business, and prayer in small groups.

The decision to meet at round tables received many expressions of appreciation. "This year I really felt I was a part of everything. I love the round tables. It was the best idea," said one delegate, speaking at the microphone during a time for conversation with the moderator.

Meeting at round tables "is absolutely fantastic," said another delegate, recommending that it be considered for future Annual Conferences.

Each table seated eight or more delegates, with one identified in advance as table facilitator to help facilitate the group discussion of questions. For at least the first day of business, delegates were seated at tables where they would meet new people from outside their own districts.

"Table talk" was used in particular following reports from the Conference-related agencies: Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, Church of the Brethren, and On Earth Peace. After each report, tables had several minutes to discuss questions posed by the agency, and then several minutes for table representatives to come to the microphones to report out of the groups and ask further questions. During "table talk," the delegates agreed to a rule limiting speeches at the microphones to

45 seconds in an attempt to allow more people to speak.

Table talk also facilitated discussion of the statement issued by Standing Committee titled "A Way Forward," intended to address the continuing controversy following last year's Annual



Glenn Ringel



Regina Holmes

*Delegates discussed business items at round tables this year, which many agree helped facilitate conversation as well as camaraderie. Table 92 (at left) sports hard candy, one of the many table groups where delegates shared snacks and goodies.*



Charm Riegel

# TABLE

Conference decision to reaffirm the 1983 statement on sexuality and continue deeper conversation outside of the query process (“A Way Forward” is at [www.brethren.org/news/2012/ac2012-onsite-news/a-way-forward.html](http://www.brethren.org/news/2012/ac2012-onsite-news/a-way-forward.html)). Out of the times of table talk, probing questions and concerns from across the theological spectrum were posed to all of the groups that have made decisions that some consider controversial, including the Mission and Ministry Board, the Program and Arrangements Committee, and On Earth Peace.

Opportunity for deeper discussion seemed to encourage deeper sharing by church leaders. For example, after concerns were voiced about decisions that open the possibility for a Brethren Volunteer Service project at the Brethren and Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, general secretary Stan Noffsinger gave an emotional statement from the floor. “My apologies to the church because it was never my intention to hurt the body,” he said. “It was my intention to expand the

boundaries of the body. I pray that nothing I have done has hurt anyone’s relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Despite a sense of underlying controversy at times, camaraderie quickly developed among table groups. After the first day of business, the moderator invited each table to decide for itself whether to stay together the next day, or indicate that the table was open to new members. The vast majority decided to stay together.

Tables began to acquire nicknames, or became known for the snacks and goodies they shared with each other, which became a running joke at the microphones. One group was nicknamed “The Wild, Woolly, and Wonderful Table,” another the “Table of Shared Mints and Gum.” One table was known to have donuts, and the Table 3 spokesperson announced, “We have chocolate, the best kept secret here.” At one table a cake was spotted by envious bystanders, and another shared fresh strawberries.

At the end of business Tuesday—the last time the table groups would be

## AC WRAP-UP AND SERMONS

A video wrap-up of the 2012 Conference and the five sermons preached for the Conference worship services are each offered in DVD format by Brethren Press. The wrap-up provides an overview of the Church of the Brethren Conference held July 7-11 in St. Louis, including popular bonus material such as the “live report” of denominational ministries and video clips of the individuals and congregations who were showcased as “continuing the work of Jesus.” The DVD of sermons contains the messages given by preachers Walter Brueggemann, Tim Harvey, Becky Ball-Miller, Jennifer Leath, and Daniel D’Oleo. David Sollenberger produced both videos. They can be purchased from Brethren Press (call 800-441-3712) at \$29.95 for the wrap-up; \$24.95 for the sermons.

together—many exchanged contact information so that they could stay in touch. Others were seen taking group photos, or giving hugs or handshakes around their circles.

**D**uring business sessions, the Annual Conference approved a variety of polity changes for districts and the Program and Arrangements Committee, approved a recommendation to discontinue the Committee on Interchurch Relations (CIR) in anticipation of a new vision for ecumenical witness, gave two groups additional time to work on revisions to the Ethics for Congregations document and response to climate change, and recommended a cost of living increase for pastor salaries.

An item of business on the church's ecumenical witness came from a study

committee that has reviewed the Brethren history of ecumenism and the work of CIR in particular. The Conference approved a recommendation to discontinue the CIR, which has been in place since 1968 to carry forward conversations and activities with other church communions and encourage cooperation with other religious traditions, and a recommendation that the Mission and Ministry Board and denominational Leadership Team appoint a committee to write a "Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century."

General secretary Stan Noffsinger explained that approval of an additional recommendation "that the church's ecumenical witness be expressed

by the staff and the church at large" makes it clear that denominational staff carry responsibility for the ecumenical witness in the interim, until a new vision is put in place. It also encourages congregations and individual Brethren to take initiative for ecumenical involvements on a local level. "We are well aware that many of our churches are engaging in ecumenism," he told the delegates, adding that he considers that

*A skit during presentation of the Vision Statement was a lighthearted look at what the apostles Paul and Peter might have said about having a vision statement. Playing Paul: Larry Glick (aka A. Mack), playing Peter: committee member David Sollenberger.*



## A CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN VISION STATEMENT IS ADOPTED FOR 2012-2020

On Monday morning, July 9, the following vision statement was adopted by the delegate body for denomination-wide use:

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

This vision statement is expected to be useful to focus the mission of the church and spur activity on the denominational level and also in congregations and districts, much like the Goals for the '80s and Goals for the '90s did in the past. The statement is meant to be short and memorable, yet containing depth and possibilities that different congregations can work at in a variety of ways.

This vision statement came from a committee appointed in 2009, after the Annual Conference Council brought a

proposal suggesting it to Standing Committee that year. Members of the group were appointed from Standing Committee and each of the agencies reportable to Annual Conference.

In 2011, Standing Committee affirmed the vision statement and interpretive material accompanying it, but they saw the need for an implementation committee to design additional materials and study guides so the vision statement would really be used and not simply shelved after adoption.

The Vision Interpretation and Implementation Committee of David Sollenberger, Rebekah Houff, James Sampson, and Ron Nicodemus, have spent the past year gathering more resources for congregational use. Resources available to congregations include starters for children's stories in worship, sermon notes and video clips for use in worship services, instructions for banner making related to the theme, and other material.



Glenn Riegall

## ELECTION RESULTS

**Annual Conference Moderator-Elect:** Nancy Sollenberger Heishman of Tipp City, Ohio.

**Annual Conference Secretary:** James Beckwith of Lebanon, Pa.

**Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee:** Christy Waltersdorff of Lombard, Ill.

**Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:** Bernie Fuska of Timberville, Va.

**Mission and Ministry Board:**  
**Area 1** — Rhonda Ritenour of York, Pa.  
**Area 2** — J. Trent Smith of New Lebanon, Ohio.

**Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee: Representing the clergy** — Paul Brubaker of Ephrata, Pa.

**Representing the colleges** — Celia Cook-Huffman of Huntingdon, Pa.

**Brethren Benefit Trust Board:** Eric Kabler of Johnstown, Pa.

**On Earth Peace Board:** Cindy Weber-Han of West Chicago, Ill.

**Agency appointees also were confirmed by the Conference, as follows:**

**On Earth Peace Board:** Melisa Grandison of Quinter, Kan., and Don Mitchell of Mechanicsburg, Pa.

**Bethany Theological Seminary Trustees:** Christina Bucher of Elizabethtown, Pa., and Martha Farahat of Oceano, Calif.

**Brethren Benefit Trust Board:** Ann Quay Davis of Covina, Calif., and Thomas McCracken of York, Pa.

a success for the entire denomination.

The need for a new ecumenical vision comes out of a changing ecumenical and interfaith environment worldwide that poses challenges for the church, and a sense of opportunities for the Brethren voice to reach beyond traditional venues, at a time when the actual work being done by CIR has dwindled.

The recommendations came with the involvement of the CIR, and after the decision to discontinue the committee, chair Paul Roth gave a final CIR report. To the church he said, "We entrust this legacy of witness, that it continue faithfully." He added, "We firmly believe that God's Spirit is actively at work in this transition."

### Polity revisions are approved

Revisions to polity on districts, proposed by the Council of District Executives, were approved. Existing polity dated back to 1965 and the revisions in essence update that polity to make it congruent with current practice. On a few points, the polity revisions call for new action on the part of districts, for example encouraging them to put in place vision and mission statements and to provide visionary leadership. Other changes give districts more flexibility in structure and staffing to reflect their wide variations of size and

population. The polity changes are relevant to Section I, District Organization and Function of Chapter 3 of the denomination's *Manual of Organization and Polity*.

A brief item was approved recommending that polity be amended to remove a requirement for the Church of the Brethren Treasurer to be on the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee.

### Additional time granted to two groups

Congregational Life Ministries staff charged with revising the Ethics for Congregations document have received two years of additional time to do their work. A hearing was held at this year's Annual Conference, and the timeline for future action includes hearings on a first draft of revisions in 2013, with a revised document to be presented to the 2014 Conference.

A working group led by the Advocacy and Peace Witness Office received approval for another year to respond to

*The new Annual Conference officers for 2012-13 were consecrated for their service to the church with prayer and laying on of hands: from left, kneeling, moderator-elect Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, moderator Robert Krouse, and secretary James Beckwith. Beckwith's terms of service will continue through 2017.*



Glenn Riegall

the 2011 query "Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth's Climate." A hearing this year produced ideas for the working group, and a special exhibit on climate change was provided for Conference-goers to get information and bring questions, concerns, and feedback. The working group does not anticipate a need for revision of existing Annual Conference statements that already provide guidance for the care of Creation, but will consider ways individuals, congregations, and the denomination can take further action.

#### Cost of living increase recommended

A 1.7 percent cost of living increase to the Minimum Cash Salary Table for pastors for 2013 was approved. The increase came as a recommendation from the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee.



Regina Holmes

## OTHER BUSINESS

### Elections query is returned, Call to Accountability reaffirmed

A query submitted by Pacific Southwest District expressing concerns about equality in Conference elections was returned. The delegate body adopted a recommendation from the Standing Committee of district delegates that "the query respectfully be returned and that the 1979 statement, 'Call to Accountability,' be reaffirmed."

The query concerned the issue of whether the ballot process should be changed beyond what the 1979 statement says to further ensure representation of women, ethnic, and other minorities in denominational leadership. It was prompted particularly by the nomination from the floor in 2011

that resulted in a male moderator-elect being chosen over the two female candidates who had been presented through the usual nominating process.

### Recommendations for revitalization of Annual Conference

If Annual Conference is to survive and thrive, planners will need to



Glenn Hugel

make some changes, according to a Revitalization Task Force report. One of the most significant is that economic realities will limit the number of future Conferences held west of the Mississippi.

"There is a strong belief among us," said task force facilitator Shawn Flory Replogle, "that Annual Conference in its totality is not all that it could be." He concluded, "The point of the report is to lay a flexible foundation for Conference to be renewed."

By a nearly unanimous vote, delegates affirmed a recommendation from Standing Committee to "receive the report from the Revitalization Task Force with appreciation and that the four recommendations proposed by the Task Force be approved."

The first two recommendations affirm

## MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION EXPANDS CONFERENCE ROLE

This year the officers of the Annual Conference invited On Earth Peace to expand its Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR) presence. The expanded presence included the entire Conference, not just the business sessions.

Identified by yellow lanyards and "Ministers of Reconciliation" tags, a team of trained volunteers was available throughout the Exhibit Hall and other Conference venues during the day and evening. They could be reached by calling a special telephone number and also could be contacted via the On Earth Peace booth and the Conference Office.

Like the MoR observers who have served during Annual Conference business sessions for over 20 years, members of the Ministers of Reconciliation Team were available to listen, help make sense of the proceedings, be a peaceful presence in tense situations, and mediate conflict, facilitate communication, and help navigate misunderstandings. They received training to respond appropriately in the event anyone was being threatened or harmed, whether verbally, emotionally, or physically.

The team was active throughout Conference and members report that interactions were overwhelmingly positive.

# WORDS FROM WORSHIP

the current length (four nights) and timing (June/July) of Annual Conference. The third releases Conference planners from polity approved in 2007 that required a strict geographical rotation covering the entire US. Instead, under the new recommendation, Conference may be rotated among a handful of locations that “maximize sound fiscal stewardship for Annual Conference and attendees.”

As part of the recommendations that were accepted, the Program and Arrangements Committee is charged with offering travel scholarships for all delegates west of the Mississippi River. Replogle acknowledged that western congregations have the most to lose from the proposal, and that the scholarship provision was made in sensitivity to that fact. Currently, he said, 74 delegates would be eligible for scholarships, which would be funded from Conference registration fees.

Fourth, the report charges Conference officers and the Program and Arrangements Committee by 2015 to implement the many recommendations pertaining to management of business sessions found in the 2007 “Doing Church Business” statement. That statement sought to move “from issue-focused Conferences to relationship-centered Conferences,” according to the task force.

Members of the Revitalization Task Force were Becky Ball-Miller, Chris Douglas (staff), Kevin Kessler, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, and Shawn Flory Replogle.

## **Delegates affirm need for more equity on Mission and Ministry Board**

Addressing a business item requesting more equitable representation for districts on the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board, the 2012 Annual Conference adopted the query and referred its concerns to the denominational board.

The query, brought by Southern Pennsylvania District, concerns the current method of selection of

**“All that is required—that Paul has already embraced—is to quit crediting the empire of consumerism. Embrace the single-minded innocence of the gospel.”**

—Walter Brueggemann, Saturday worship speaker

**“Brothers and sisters, this conflict will not undo us. Our commitment is to one another. The bonds of love that connect us in Christ are more important than this division.”**

—Moderator Tim Harvey, Sunday worship speaker

**“We’re all different and we need each other, even because of our differences. We’re all connected in the great circle of life. Simply put, build one another up, stick together. We are all one body.”**

—Becky Ball-Miller, Monday worship speaker

**“Not only are we called to love one another to the point of laying down our lives, but we might just realize that in the midst of what feels like the greatest sacrifice of our pride—and the deep convictions that sustain that pride—we will find our own salvation as well.”**

—Jennifer Leath, Tuesday worship speaker

**“If we want to plant more congregations, we must put the pot on to boil. We must take that leap of faith that shows our trust in God, because God will provide.”**

—Daniel D’Oleo, Wednesday worship speaker

Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



*Delegates engage in table talk during discussion of revisions to the Ministerial Leadership polity document. The ministerial leadership polity will be a study document for a year before coming back to the 2013 Conference for consideration.*



Regina Holmes

*The Quilt Auction is always a highlight thanks to the many volunteers quilting during Annual Conference.*

members of the Mission and Ministry Board that uses geographical areas originally designed for Congregational Life Team staffing. A wide disparity between these areas in membership numbers has created a sense of unfairness in representation. Use of the geographical areas in selecting board members also means that some districts may not have anyone on the board for extended periods of time.

#### **Revision to Ministerial Leadership polity document receives a first reading**

Delegates engaged in a first reading of a proposed revision of the denomination's ministerial leadership polity, paving the way for a year of study and potential approval at the 2013 Annual Conference.

If approved, the new polity would replace previous ministry polity documents and be implemented beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

Ministry Office director Mary Jo Flory-Steury, who also serves as associate general secretary, has shepherded the paper throughout its development. She explained that the seed for the polity revisions was planted at a 2007 Ministerial Leadership Conference and initial drafting began in 2009. Various stakeholders in the church received multiple opportunities to shape the paper along the way.

Perhaps the most noticeable polity change is that the familiar language of "licensed minister" and "ordained minister" would be altered. In the new

## BITS AND PIECES

**Registration figures** for the 2012 Conference included 731 delegates and 1,610 non-delegates, for a total of 2,341 people attending.

**Five new fellowships and congregations have been welcomed** to the denomination: Nuevo Amanecer Church of the Brethren in Bethlehem, Pa.; Renacer Iglesia Cristiana in Leola, Pa.; Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren; Sanford (Maine) Fellowship; and Sierra Bayamon Iglesia de los Hermanos in Puerto Rico.

**A total of \$38,595.82 was received in Annual Conference offerings:** \$6,332.35 received in Saturday evening's offering

during worship, \$8,526.96 received on Sunday, \$7,790.61 received on Monday, \$9,550.75 received on Tuesday, and \$6,395.15 received on Wednesday.

**The all-Conference service project this year collected 417 backpacks** full of school supplies, and 40 additional boxes of supplies, during a Sunday morning offering and additional day's collections. Also monetary donations of \$543 were given to the project. The offering for the St. Louis schools was both a service project and an outreach and witness to the host community.

**CODE, the Council of District Executives**, held its first ever Annual Conference dinner on July 9. A highlight of the dinner was a new award for pastoral excellence presented to Janice Custer, pastor of Huntsdale Church of the Brethren in Carlisle, Pa.

Attendees at this year's

**Brethren Press and Messenger Dinner** received a coupon for a special "after-dinner gift" through a generous donation from an anonymous benefactor. Each was eligible to pick up a free copy of the new book *A Dunker Guide to Brethren Beliefs* when they made a purchase at the Brethren Press bookstore.

**The Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF)** continued its long-standing practice of giving free meal tickets to all those interested in attending its events. The BRF offered a lunch on Monday on the topic "Brethren Mission Fund Workcamp/Mission Trip to Haiti," led by Doug Miller; and a dinner program on Tuesday at which Bob Kettering spoke on the topic "Going Out on a Limb." Also, the BRF offered a prayer and fasting session on Sunday over the lunch hour. Craig Alan Myers, moderator for the dinner

meeting, announced upcoming BRF events including Brethren Alive and the Brethren Bible Institute.

**Voices for an Open Spirit (VOS)** also held its annual dinner in St. Louis. The group celebrated 10 years of existence, with guest speaker Jim Lehman who helped found VOS at Annual Conference a decade ago, and announced that it is considering passing on its legacy to the newly formed "Open Table Cooperative."

**The Blood Drive** came close to meeting its goal of 200 units, collecting 191 useable units of blood out of 196 attempted donations. The blood drive was one way for Brethren to give back to their host community, held during what the American Red Cross (ARC) is deeming a time of "national emergency crisis" in terms of blood being available across the US.

The Brethren Mennonite



Glenn Riegel

polity, a person discerning a call to ministry is assisted by an accountability and support group termed a "Calling Cohort" to flesh out the call and develop a "Covenant of Accountability" to guide a process of preparation. Once approved by congregation and district, the applicant becomes an "Inquiring Minister" and moves toward becoming either a "Commissioned Minister" with a

specific role in one congregation or an "Ordained Minister," a role virtually identical to ordained ministry in current polity. Absent from the new polity is the former role of "licensed lay speaker."

Instead of a hierarchy of ministry,

the document speaks of three ministry circles (licensed, commissioned, ordained) designed to "effectively form, equip, and support ministers for a particular sort of ministry within the denomination."

Flory-Steury noted that while some of the terminology is unfamiliar, many of the concepts are not new and resources have been provided to facilitate deeper understanding of the document. She encouraged congregations to study the paper in the coming year. 

The 2012 Annual Conference news team consisted of writers Don Fitzkee, Mandy Garcia, Karen Garrett, Randy Miller, Frank Ramirez, Frances Townsend; photographers Glenn Riegel, Regina Holmes, Debbie Surin, Alysson Wittmeyer; *Conference Journal* editor Eddie Edmonds and reporter Maddie Dulabaum; web staff Amy Heckert and Don Knieriem; and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren.



Regina Holmes

*A group of 16 moderators of Annual Conference were at a luncheon on July 9. The group is pictured in chronological order of their service, beginning with at front left Earle W. Fike Jr. having the most seniority. Pictured in the front row from left: Earle W. Fike Jr. (1982), Paul W. Hoffman (1983), Guy E. Wampler (1987), Curtis W. Dubble (1990), Earl Ziegler (1994), Judy Mills Reimer (1995), H. Fred Bernhard (1996). In the back row, from left: Lowell Flory (1999), Chris Bowman (2004), Ronald Beachley (2006), Belita D. Mitchell (2007), James M. Beckwith (2008), David K. Shumate (2009), Shawn Flory Replogle (2010), Robert Alley (2011), Tim Harvey (2012)."*

Council for LGBT Interests (BMC) held a **service project during Conference** to collect donations of personal hygiene supplies for homeless and at-risk people in St. Louis. The project was in cooperation with The Bridge, a ministry of Centenary United Methodist Church, which serves over 3,000 meals weekly and provides a safe place for people to relax, make phone calls, use the Internet, and find support.

**The Quilt Auction raised \$6,000 for hunger relief,** sponsored by the Association

for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren (AACB). The seven pieces auctioned included two mini quilts and five quilted wall hangings. Eddie Edmonds was auctioneer this year, with Fred Bernhard and Dan Poole as spotters and Tara Hornbacker as the main coordinator for quilting.

**After the SERRV store in the exhibit hall suffered a robbery,** losing several hundred dollars worth of jewelry merchandise, approximately \$1,000 was donated back to SERRV by

concerned Conference-goers. Conference director Chris Douglas shared the gratitude of the SERRV staff for the care they received from many people who stopped by the store.

The St. Louis pavement was steamy Sunday morning as runners and walkers gathered at Forest Park for the **Brethren Benefit Trust Fitness Challenge**. Despite the heat and humidity, 81 Brethren turned out at 7 a.m. to participate in this popular Annual Conference event. The top finishers were:

Chelsea Goss, first place female runner; Nate Hosler, first place male runner; Don Shankster, first place male walker; and Susan Fox, first place female walker.

**"Move in Our Midst"** has been announced as next year's Annual Conference theme. Bob Krouse, who will serve as moderator for the Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C., on June 29-July 3, 2013, made the announcement. Krouse said that next year is, coincidentally, the 100th anniversary of the birth of hymn writer Ken Morse.

## MISSION AND MINISTRY BOARD OPTIMISTIC DESPITE CHALLENGES

**T**he Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board tackled a handful of business items interspersed with reports from staff and others during its Saturday meeting prior to the start of Annual Conference.

Also on the agenda were adoption of a budget parameter for 2013, recognitions of board members concluding their terms, New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center employees finishing their employment due to the center's closing, and Glenn and Linda Timmons upon their retirement as coordinators of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program funded with help from Lilly Endowment Inc.

General secretary Stan Noffsinger gave a brief update on the Strategic Plan implementation, in which directional goals for the church are being shaped by staff committees for execution in programs. Several staff gave progress reports on each of the six areas of emphasis. "I appreciate all the work that's being done by the staff," said Andy Hamilton, echoing the sentiment expressed by several

board members.

Treasurer LeAnn Wine presented a financial report which included a 2012 year-to-date review, along with an update on the Interfund Borrowing Proposal that was discussed at some length at the March meeting and for which the board had requested further information.

"We did receive a clean audit for our 2011 financials," Wine said. She added, "Congregational giving is up through May. We're encouraged by this. Overall, we are showing an increase in all giving of about nine percent over 2011."

Wine then provided an overview of giving patterns in the church, noting that there tends to be a gradual increase in expenses—brought on by such factors as cost of living—resulting in the need for cuts. She noted that, despite some of the positive signs in 2011, congregational giving has been on a downward trend in general over the past two decades, and that individual giving has been flat. She said that steps taken to

address these matters have included cutting program expenses and laying off staff. Staff are

exploring ways to reverse the downward trend, including ways to clarify the vision and mission of the church among congregations, and elucidate the direct connection between donations and church ministries. It was suggested that volunteer congregational ambassadors be appointed to help implement these goals.

Vice chair Becky Ball-Miller said, "I'm excited that staff is interested in bringing about this change. We are fully engaged as a board," she added, noting the need to use "we" language, instead of "us" and "them" when referring to different sectors of the church such as staff, board, and congregations.

The board approved the recommended 2013 budget parameter for Core Ministries of income/expense of \$5,043,000. The board also unanimously approved Wine's recommendation for a suspension of the interfund borrowing policy until a recommendation can be made that encompasses all financial policies relating to the Church of the Brethren's self-funded ministries.

Associate general secretary Mary Jo Flory-Steury and Global Mission and Service executive director Jay Wittmeyer presented highlights of their May trip to Haiti, during which they interviewed 19 candidates for licensing



*During the Saturday Mission and Ministry Board meeting, the Open Roof Award was presented to three congregations. Shown here are representatives of the churches with Congregational Life Ministries executive Jonathan Shively (at left). The recipients are Hanover (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, represented by Geraldine Godfrey; Mountville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, represented by Rebecca Fuchs; and Wabash (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, represented by pastor Kay Gaier.*



in the Church of the Brethren.

"I'm always struck in international travel by the incredible heart and spirit of a people who could, by any of our standards, be discouraged, despondent, and in despair, and this trip was no different," Flory-Steury said. "But their depth of spirit and faith, and the message of what Jesus has done for them, are incredible. Several had striking stories about what happened to them in the quake. Of the 19 we interviewed, four were women. This is a model of a fledgling church that is tapping faithful individuals, male and female."

Noffsinger cited the contributions of board members Frances Townsend and Terry Lewis, who are concluding their terms this year. He also paid tribute to former employees of the New Windsor Conference Center, whose jobs were terminated with the closing of the center June 4.

A special recognition was given to Glenn and Linda Timmons for their years of service to the Church of the Brethren, with particular thanks for their leadership with the Brethren Academy's ministry leadership partnership of the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Seminary.

Noffsinger also called attention to the long-term service of Fred Swartz who concluded his second term as secretary for Annual Conference. Special recognition of Swartz's work as secretary, among other areas of service, was made during the Conference.

Other reports were received from advocacy and peace witness director Nate Hosler on the Ecumenical Season of Prayer, with special concern focused on the violence in Syria; Youth and Young Adult Ministries director Becky Ullom on the recent Christian Citizenship Seminar; National Young Adult Conference coordinator Carol Fike, who presented a lively video overview of the June conference; and Congregational Life executive director Jonathan Shively who delivered a report on the May Church Planting Conference. Board member Gilbert Romero, who attended the event, commented, "One of the great things about the conference was coming together as a family, and the feeling of encouragement. We know we're not alone out there."

Looking ahead, Stan Noffsinger noted that plans are underway for members of the Mission and Ministry Board to visit Israel and Palestine in December. The trip, which will be held in conjunction with representatives from the American Baptist Churches, will include visits with members of Christian Peacemaker Teams, as well as a former Israeli defense security officer who has changed his perspective on conflict since leaving the military.—Randy Miller

*A "live" report on the Church of the Brethren ministries gave Conference delegates a glimpse into the work that the Mission and Ministry Board, and new directional goals for that work. The presentation included doors, each painted with words and images to reflect one of the goals: Brethren voice, service, congregational vitality, mission, and church planting. "Jesus moved into the neighborhood" was the theme for the report.*



*Linda and Glenn Timmons receive a special recognition at the Mission and Ministry Board meeting, upon the announcement of their retirement. From left: Academy executive Julie Hostetter, Ministry executive and associate general secretary Mary Jo Flory-Steury, Linda Timmons, and Glenn Timmons.*



# From fear to faith

taking part in God's ongoing work

by Joshua Brockway

**F**or many Mary's song, or the Magnificat, tops the list of favorite scriptures. It has everything we could want: the direct speech of a woman, a song of confident praise, and a vision for an upside-down kingdom. It has served as the inspiration for many of the great composers of the ages, and the words, even in Latin, seem to stir a grand awareness of God's work in the incarnation.

The verses of Luke 1:46-56 are often lifted out of context as a grand proclamation of what is to come. Yet the immediate setting of Mary's own life and struggle seem to fade into the background. This is a young girl, scarcely old enough to bear children let alone experience the social shame of being an unwed mother. She has every reason to fear for her life. Nevertheless, when she greets Elizabeth, Mary utters such beautiful praise and speaks with the confidence of all the prophets.

Mary has taken the words of Gabriel—recorded earlier in Luke 1:30—to heart: "Do not be afraid." Throughout scripture, angelic visitors open with that familiar refrain. Usually though, those words are connected to the vision itself. It is as if the

angels are saying, "I know you are freaked out by the light, voices, and wings, but there is no need to be afraid." Yet, it is also the case that when the angel arrives, the news is not all that comforting. In Mary's case, the news was probably more frightening than the presence of Gabriel. She seems to deserve two statements of comfort from Gabriel, first for the appearance itself, and second for the implications of his message.

In each case, that of the angelic visitation and the announcement by Elizabeth, Mary seems unwavering. In the earlier verses of what has come to be known as the annunciation in Luke 1:26-38, she does ask questions, but her concern seems to be more related to mechanics than implications. She is attentive to the fact that she is both a virgin and not married, so a child is outside the realm of possibility. How could this take place? Even as Gabriel tells her of the Holy Spirit's activity in her physical body, she seems to have no fear. "Let it be according to your word." The same stoic confidence comes in the great words of her prayer. She can proclaim the future activities of God, including the overthrow of the proud and wealthy, with

not a blink of the eye. What confidence she has in the message from the angel and Elizabeth.

So what is it about Mary? How can she face such life-altering, religion-shattering, world-changing news without so much as a question? Furthermore, how can she react with little surprise to Elizabeth's pronouncement, and with such piercing insight into the kingdom of God?

Just within these first verses of the gospel, Luke makes one thing clear. Though the forward momentum of the book is based on the coming of Christ and the transformation the incarnation entails, the assurance underlying the narrative is that God has been, and thus will always be, faithful. It is right there in Mary's song. If we were to spin through those verses quickly to find a future tense verb, we would be disappointed. God has done this already and is continuing the transformation.

Mary stands in the long line of prophets. Her song does not predict the future, but declares the past actions of God. She isn't convinced to obedience by a cinematic confirmation of her son's triumph. Rather she is obedient because God has been faithful. That is God's nature, to remain faithful to God's people. She isn't afraid of the angel's news because she is confident that God will stand by her. Even later, when she receives a very different pronouncement, namely that a sword will pierce her own soul (Luke 2:35), we see the same calm and confident woman.

The silent thread throughout the scriptures is that no matter the relationship of the people to God, God is always faithful. Eugene Peterson highlights what he calls the "Saw-toothed History" of Israel (*Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Intervarsity Press, 1980 & 2000, page 86). In all their ups and downs, God remains their God. That is Mary's conviction. It is what calms her in her fear, it is what strengthens her obedience, and it is what carries her through the death of her son to the resurrection of her Lord.

We human beings have a way of basing our trust on the promise of some reward. Our work-a-day life is based on the contract that says there will be a paycheck on Friday for the labor we have given the week before. Today, our lives of faith are equally defined by an expectation for future reward. Though we do live in expectation of the coming kingdom, we do so not because of some prediction conjured up by a pastor or sage, but because we know God "has scattered the proud . . . has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly" (1:51b-52). Our trust is in a God who is, has been, and always will be working for the good of those who call on his name. So we take on Mary's song as a grand litany of hope, a trust in the coming of a just and



## SO WHAT IS IT ABOUT MARY? HOW CAN SHE FACE SUCH LIFE-ALTERING, RELIGION-SHATTERING, WORLD-CHANGING NEWS WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A QUESTION?

transformed world in the hands of God.

Hope, however, has been politically appropriated today as a rhetorical phrase to draw our allegiances. Though we are people of hope, we must realize that often our trust is misplaced. Our politicians, regardless of flavor, speak convincingly of hope placed in them and their policies to change the state of things. Even within the church, we place confidence in our structures as a means to unite us. Mary's song challenges us to reassess our trust, to place it in the faithfulness of God rather than our systems and politicians. Thus, we must reclaim and proclaim our faith in the grace and goodness of God. We are saved not because of our works. God has already saved us. We are here, as the church, because God has already called us.

"O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come," goes the familiar Isaac Watts hymn. Yet this hope is not one that looks back at days gone by. There are many who wish to return to a time when we think God has done the works of Mary's prayer. The logic is rather clear. If we could simply reclaim the day when God's reconciling work was accomplished, the current day would remain in God's favor. As Mary sings, though, the vision is not a return path but a journey into God's reign. There is no mistaking that the Magnificat is a poetic proclamation of God's continuing work in the infant she carries. Though she speaks in the past tense, her song presents a vision of what God is doing. In the language of theologians, this is the "already and not yet" nature of God's work.

God is at work now, both transforming what is and granting us the vision of what is to come. By singing of this now-and-not-yet vision, Mary invites us into that ongoing divine work. Just as she was a part of God's mission in Christ, we as the church continue to participate in God's present grace. Her words remind us of faith, and call us back into the kingdom vision. As people of faith, ours is not to initiate the work, just to take part in what God is already doing. ❧

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

## Three Brethren disaster projects extended

Brethren Disaster Ministries has announced a decision to extend the timeline for three of its disaster rebuilding project sites. The projects in Prattsville, N.Y., and Town Creek, Ala., will be extended through October, and the site in Pulaski, Va., will continue through September.

Projects are staffed primarily by groups of volunteers from the Church of the Brethren districts, who typically spend a week working at a disaster site. District groups are invited to contact coordinator Jane Yount at the Brethren Disaster Ministries office in New Windsor, Md., to schedule volunteer groups. Call her at 800-451-4407.

The project at Arab, Ala., was completed and closed as of the end of June. Volunteer groups scheduled to work at that site have been rescheduled to other sites.

The project in Prattsville, N.Y., is repairing homes destroyed by floods following Hurricane Irene, which pummeled the East Coast on Aug. 27-28 last year. The storm brought the worst flash flooding in memory to the small town of Prattsville in the Catskills, in a low-income region of New York. Nearly 300 homes were covered by floodwater, and many of the affected residents are uninsured or elderly. The Brethren Disaster Ministries project in Prattsville opened July 1.

The Town Creek project in Lawrence County, Ala., also opened July 1. Brethren Disaster Ministries is

assisting survivors of an EF5 tornado that plowed across the county last year on April 27. It claimed 14 lives and wiped away entire neighborhoods. The current caseload at the project includes replacement of roofs and the building of new homes.

The Pulaski, Va., project is in response to two tornadoes that struck on April 8, 2011. This project has been extended because Brethren Disaster Ministries has accepted an assignment to build one more new home. Volunteers are engaged in completing one home and will start the final new building as soon as the foundation is put in.



*A house under construction at the Brethren Disaster Ministries project site in Pulaski, Va.*

Shannon Pratt-Herfington

## Heifer International receives 2012 World Service Medal

Heifer International has been presented with the Kiwanis International's 2012 World Service



Medal. The medal, presented to Heifer International president Pierre Ferrari by Kiwanis International president Alan Penn at the organization's annual convention in New Orleans, also provides a \$10,000 grant.

Previous winners have included Mother Teresa, Sir Roger Moore and Audrey Hepburn, and First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Rosalynn

Carter. Since 1944, when Heifer International was begun by Dan West as the Church of the Brethren's Heifer Project, the organization has provided livestock and agricultural training to families who struggle to survive. To date, more than 15 million families in more than 125 countries, including the US, have been assisted to become self-reliant.

*Members of BVS Unit 297 have completed orientation and began their term of volunteer service this summer: front from left, Jenna Horgan, Amber Buck, Margaret Hughes; back from left, Chris Horgan, Jennie Ott, Hallie Pilcher, David Hoffmann, Shurè-Nachelle Parrish.*



Kerstin Johnson

## BVS summer unit begins work at project sites

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 297 has completed its orientation and begun work at a number of project sites in the United States, Ireland, and El Salvador. The summer unit held orientation June 10-29 in Chicago and Elgin, Ill.

Following are the new BVS volunteers, their home congregations or home towns, and project sites:

Amber Buck of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren in Lebanon, Pa., is working at Comfort House Services Inc. in McAllen, Texas.

David Hoffmann of Emmendingen, Germany, is serving at Spanish Catholic Charities in Washington, D.C.

Jenna and Chris Horgan of Minneapolis, Minn., are assigned to El Centro Arte para la Paz in Suchitoto, El Salvador.

Margaret Hughes of Charlottesville, Va.,

has been assigned to L'Arche Community in Cork, Ireland.

Jennie Ott of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., is working with Camp Myrtlewood in Myrtle Point, Ore.

Shurè-Nachelle Parrish of Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., will serve at a location still to be determined.

Hallie Pilcher of First Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., is volunteering for Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md.

The BVS BRF (Brethren Revival Fellowship) orientation unit was held Aug. 19-29 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. The BVS Fall orientation unit is set for Sept. 16-Oct. 5, also at the Brethren Service Center. For more about Brethren Volunteer Service go to [www.brethren.org/bvs](http://www.brethren.org/bvs).



Kerstin Flory

### BVSers serving in Europe

*held an annual retreat in June: front from left, Courtney Klosterman, serving at Quaker Cottage in Belfast, N. Ireland; Marie Schuster, Arche Tecklenburg, Germany; Tania Monroy, Fellowship of Reconciliation Germany, in Minden, Germany; Samantha Carwile, Quaker Cottage, Belfast; Cori Miner, Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, N. Ireland; Gloria Oseguera-Verdugo, L'Arche Kilkenny, Callan, Ireland. Back row from left, Megan Miller, East Belfast Mission, N. Ireland; Julianne Funk, Mali Koraci (Small Steps), Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Katarina Eller, Brot und Rosen, Hamburg, Germany; Adam Stokes, Greenhill YMCA; Samantha Lyon-Hill, OKC Abrasevic (Youth Cultural Center), Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Tiffany Monarch, L'Arche Belfast; Michelle Cernoch, L'Arche Cork, Ireland.*

## UPCOMINGEVENTS

**Sept. 7-8 Children's Disaster Services Training,** Johnson City, Texas

**Sept. 14-16 Oregon and Washington District Conference,** Camp Myrtlewood, Myrtle Point, Ore.

**Sept. 14-15 Northern Indiana District Conference,** Camp Alexander Mack, Milford, Ind.

**Sept. 14-15 Southern Pennsylvania District Conference,** Faith Community of the Brethren Home, New Oxford, Pa.

**Sept. 16-Oct. 5 Brethren Volunteer Service fall unit orientation**

**Sept. 21-22 Missouri and Arkansas District Conference,** Roach, Mo.

**Sept. 28-29 Idaho District Conference,** Mountain View Church of the Brethren, Boise, Idaho

**Oct. 5-6 Children's Disaster Services Training,** Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren

**Oct. 5-6 Children's Disaster Services Training,** Oklahoma City, Okla.

**Oct. 7 Global Mission Offering and World Communion Day**

## Peace Day 2012 theme is 'Praying for Ceasefire'

On Earth Peace has announced a theme and a new name for its campaign encouraging churches and communities to observe the International Day of Prayer for Peace on Sept. 21. This is the sixth year that On Earth Peace has held its campaign. Peace Day is the new name for the campaign, centered this year on the theme "Praying for Ceasefire." On Earth Peace is inviting community groups and church congregations to organize events on or near Sept. 21. It is seeking 200 faith and community groups around the world to plan public events that include prayer, cultural sharing, music, and art to help communities talk and pray together.

In addition, "this year On Earth Peace is inviting communities to imagine something beyond the usual prayer vigil observance and to declare or pray for a 24-hour ceasefire based on the unique struggles and challenges of your community," said the organization.

"What could a real ceasefire look like where you are? What ceasefire do you pray for?" asks On Earth Peace. "It could mean not one incident of domestic violence. An end to bullying. No more shootings. A time to pray for restored relationships or new relationships to be formed across walls that divide. A time to declare that all the wars



are over and to call for our young men and women to come home. A pause to seek, asking God for vision for a new path. Who do you need to bring together to pray in a new and powerful way to challenge violence?"

Observance of a day for Christians to pray for peace began in 2004 as part of the ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence (DoV) after an agreement between the heads of the WCC and the United Nations.

For more about Peace Day go to <http://prayingforceasefire.tumblr.com>.

### PERSONNELCHANGES



*Terry Barkley displays an old manuscript at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. He has served as archivist and director since November 2010.*

**Terry Barkley** has announced his resignation as archivist and director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA) at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. Oct. 31 will be his last day at the BHLA, allowing him to complete two full years in the position.

Barkley's accomplishments include a smooth transition following the death of former archivist Ken Shaffer Jr., and the continuation of projects that Shaffer had begun, including collaborations with the Brethren Digital Archives and the Civilian Public Service website. He has expanded working relationships with the Fellowship of Brethren Genealogists and the Brethren Heritage Center in Ohio. He also was a facilitator at the Alexander Mack Jr. Conference at the Young Center at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College in June.

Major BHLA acquisitions during his service include the H. Austin Cooper papers and a wooden chest (c. 1817) belonging to Henry Kurtz, the first

Brethren publisher.

He joined the Church of the Brethren as a member in 1980, and began as director of the BHLA on Nov. 1, 2010, bringing experience from previous positions as archivist at Marion (Ala.) Military Institute and as archivist/museum curator at Bridgewater (Va.) College 1993-2005.

**Julie Hostetter** has been promoted to executive director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. The change in title was announced at Bethany Seminary's 107th commencement in May. The academy is a ministry training partnership of the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry and Bethany Theological Seminary.

**Ron Wyrick** completed his term of service as interim district executive for the Church of the Brethren's Shenandoah District on July 31. Wyrick stepped into the role on a fulltime basis last November. The district welcomed John N. Jantzi as district executive minister on Aug. 1.

## Churches call for an end to gun violence

A number of ecumenical partners of the Church of the Brethren have made statements following the recent shooting spree in Aurora, Colo. The president of the National Council of Churches (NCC) said Christians across the nation are surrounding the community in prayer following the loss of loved ones and neighbors in the shooting rampage.

NCC president Kathryn Lohre also called upon elected officials at every level of government to “seek policies that will foster greater peace in our communities and throughout this country,” pointing out that the NCC has been expressing its concern about gun violence for decades. The NCC’s most recent resolution on the issue, the 2010 “Ending Gun Violence, A Call to Action,” was affirmed by the Church of the Brethren’s Mission and Ministry Board and calls for a unified effort of churches, government, and individuals to enact reforms that limit access to assault weapons and handguns, including closing the so-called federal “gun show loophole.” The resolution is at [www.nccusa.org/NCCpolicies/endinggunviolence.pdf](http://www.nccusa.org/NCCpolicies/endinggunviolence.pdf).

In related news, leaders of organizations representing some 90 percent of the world’s two billion Christians have



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Carford

issued a joint appeal to the 194 governments currently negotiating the first global Arms Trade Treaty. Their message is “Keep ammunition in the treaty,” according to the World Council of Churches. Proposals on the negotiating table would ban arms sales for genocide, war crimes, and grave human rights violations.

Almost all of the 194 states involved recognize that the arms and ammunition most often used in these crimes must therefore be included in the treaty, the release noted. “Churches and their members witness the human costs of unlawful armed violence every day, as victims are brought to church hospitals and church graveyards in different parts of the world. The Arms Trade Treaty must regulate the ammunition that strikes them down,” said the WCC. The groups joining together in the appeal are the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, Pax Christi International, and Caritas.



New Community Project

## Brethren travel to the Amazon for Learning Tour

Thirteen Church of the Brethren members joined a New Community Project Learning Tour to the Ecuadoran Amazon in mid-June. The group was hosted by partner organization SELVA, and spent five days in the Cuyabeno Ecological Reserve, one of the most biodiverse—and threatened—areas on the planet. The group hiked and travelled by boat through the forest and rivers, learned about local culture and challenges facing native people and the ecosystem, got a first-hand look at one of many toxic waste ponds near oil processing facilities in the Ecuadoran Amazon, and noted widespread deforestation due to oil production, cocoa and coffee plantations, cattle ranching, and human settlements. There was also a visit to a 137-acre parcel NCP has purchased to preserve, adjacent to the reserve. More about New Community Project is at [www.newcommunityproject.org](http://www.newcommunityproject.org).

## Brethren Voices now available on YouTube

Brethren Voices, the community television program produced by Portland (Ore.) Peace Church of the Brethren, can now be viewed on YouTube at [www.YouTube.com/BrethrenVoices](http://www.YouTube.com/BrethrenVoices).

The recent July program featured the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. Hosted by Brent Carlson, the show meets Jeff Bach, director of the Young Center, who discusses the ways of the early Brethren who adopted biblical pacifism, plain and compassionate living, and a shared search for truth. And in June, they featured Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and the Caring Cupboard.

Producer Ed Groff plans to place another 30 broadcasts on the Brethren Voices channel on YouTube. “All of this has been made possible by a fan of Brethren Voices in Spokane, Wash.,” Groff reports.

# Lessons from politics past

**A**n election year with the question of rights being extended to a whole new population, an unbridgeable divide deliberately widened by a cynical media outlet with its own implacable agenda, and a president whose views on the central issue of the day are evolving. It all sounds familiar enough, except that *Year of Meteors* is a book about the presidential election of 1860, not 2012.



FRANK RAMIREZ

Douglas R. Egerton walks us through the fascinating story of the complex election of 1860. The year of meteors (the title is taken from a poem by Walt Whitman) saw the flameout of the rabid racist Stephen A. Douglas, considered a shoo-in for the presidency, at least until Southern

newspaper editors like Robert Barnwell Rhett, representing the powerful economic interests of the slave owners, manipulated public opinion to split the Democratic Party and ultimately forced secession.

The secessionist movement hardly represented the population of the South. Though slavery was an intractable issue, Egerton makes it clear that most Americans North and South had no interest in splitting the nation. In South Carolina, for instance, the majority of whites did not own slaves, but 90.5 percent of the delegates to their secession convention were slave owners. It was the same at other state conventions that voted to secede.

Lies were spread, such as the reports that Republicans intended to force white women to marry black men and that within a decade Southern children “will be the *slaves* of negroes.” This despite the fact that Lincoln himself insisted that he favored sending freed slaves back to Africa. However, then, as now, the presentation of facts had little effect on what people believed.

Ultimately Lincoln won the presidency with less than 40 percent of the vote in a four-way contest, as 1860 ended with the Union fractured and the nation sliding toward what none suspected would be the bloodiest conflict in American history.

In recent years some have made the suggestion that the Civil War was about states rights or the preservation of the union, but the author makes it clear that the Civil War was about slavery. Northerners, every bit as prejudiced against blacks as Southerners, fought to preserve the Union, but the issue that tore apart the nation was slavery.

And in the decades after the war, when there was a desire on the part of whites in both the North and South to reconcile, but the talk about states’ rights continued, the only states’ right being asserted that was relevant to the Civil War conflict was the right to own other human beings.

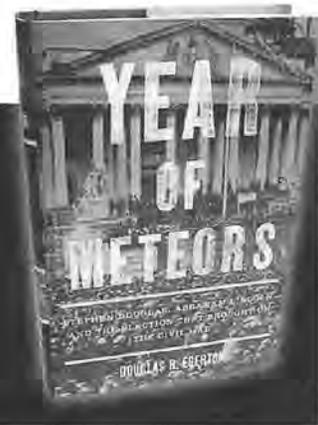
So why does this book matter? Of all the thousands of books on the Civil War, why would I recommend this one?

Maybe it’s because I was struck by the fact that almost all the people portrayed in these pages purported to be Christians, yet they had radically different views on fundamental issues and were able to use scripture to back up their positions. Some of those Christians, people like Stephen Douglas, spread outright lies—that the Republican Party (always referred to as Black Republicans) intended to force white women to marry blacks, and that white children would end up enslaved to black masters, despite proof to the contrary. (Remember, children born another generation or two in the future will have to have someone explain what is meant by interracial marriage because that term will be without meaning.) Others, like Edward Everett, who ran as a fourth party candidate, promised they would do absolutely nothing about anything.

And most of all it’s because, from the vantage point of the future, we admire those brave enough to take courageous stands. As I read the book I realized that the positions we take as Christians matter. Some people in 1860 were out-and-out wrong.

The author, Douglas R. Egerton, lives in Syracuse, N.Y., is professor of history at Le Moyne College, and is the author of several books. 

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



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election that Brought on the Civil War*. **Author:** Douglas R. Egerton. **List price:** \$29.00. **Pages:** 416. **Publisher:** Bloomsbury Press, 2010, New York.

**What others say:** “This is politics as high drama, and Egerton does it justice with his lucid, meticulous account of backroom deals, parliamentary brawling, and speeches whose rhetorical vitriol presaged violence.” —*Publishers Weekly*

## Young adults contemplate 'being the church'

More than 100 Brethren between the ages of 18 and 35 gathered in Knoxville, Tenn., in June for five days of worship, Bible study, workshops and other activities at the National Young Adult Conference. The conference theme, "Humble Yet Bold: Being the Church," focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. During the week, participants examined the Beatitudes and considered the risks, realities, and rewards of being salt and light to the world.

Speakers who challenged them in this included Angie Lahman of Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Arizona, Dana Cassell of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, Shelly West of Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Ohio, Joel Peña of Alpha and Omega Church of the Brethren in Pennsylvania, Greg Davidson Laszakovits of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Tracy Primozich representing Bethany Theological Seminary, and Josh Brockway and Nate and Jenn Hosler, representing Congregational Life and Peace Witness Ministries of the Church of the Brethren.

Workshops on topics such as Brethren Volunteer Service, workcamps, peace, scripture, spirituality, creation care, women in leadership, and a history of Brethren conflicts were held throughout the week. They were led by representatives from the Church of the Brethren, On Earth Peace, Bethany Seminary, the Open Table Cooperative, and the Center on Conscience and War.

"Coffee and Conversation," talk-back sessions, and meals hosted by NYAC speakers provided times for casual dialogue on a variety of subjects with church leaders includ-



Julie Largent

*National Young Adult Conference offered opportunities to meet and get to know young adults from across the Church of the Brethren.*

ing 2012 Annual Conference moderator Tim Harvey and general secretary Stan Noffsinger.

When they weren't studying the Sermon on the Mount or discussing Brethren ministries, participants could be found white water rafting in the Smoky Mountains, engaged in service projects at the Knoxville Area Rescue Mission and the Lost Sheep Ministry, playing ultimate Frisbee and board games, and swimming at night.

NYAC provided a safe space for attendees to gather in the name of Jesus, lift their voices in song and prayer, ask questions, and be exposed for exactly who they are: brothers and sisters called to be salt and light—humble, yet bold.

Find an album of pictures from NYAC, provided by young adult participants, at [www.brethren.org/album/nyac2012](http://www.brethren.org/album/nyac2012).

—Mandy Garcia carries out donor communications for the Church of the Brethren.

## Explore your call

High school juniors and seniors take note—Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., has announced its 2013 "Exploring Your Call" event for those interested in exploring theological studies at some time down the line. The event will be June 14-24. Participation is limited to 25 students. This grant-funded program is free for participants. Students only have to pay for transportation to and from the event. Applications will be accepted starting Sept. 1.

For information go to [www.bethanyseminary.edu/eyc](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/eyc).



*At Annual Conference this summer, night owls, singles, and young adults hung out Saturday night at the City Museum in St. Louis.*



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### A disservice to the message of Christ

Two letters in the July/August MESSENGER disturbed me greatly. One by Carl Myers stated "on issues related to homosexuality, leadership's actions were inconsistent with the leading of the Holy Spirit." D. Robert Clapper says of a retired pastor and Bethany graduate that "I will, without equivocation, question this pastor ever having the direction of the Holy Spirit." Clapper also concludes that liberals "want to take the denomination to hell in a hand basket."

The great divide is probably not over one issue like homosexuality, but rather how we view the scriptures. Many Brethren view the scriptures as the literal, infallible, inerrant word of God. Others, including myself, believe scripture should be read in light of the present culture. Much of scripture has more meaning for me metaphorically rather than literally. I doubt if the Apostle Paul and Jesus knew of terms like genetics, chromosomes, or hormonal imbalance. An increased understanding in the field of scientific research should strengthen our faith and not become a

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divisive issue. I believe God rejoices in diversity. We should celebrate it.

I meet weekly with a group of former teachers that includes some agnostics, atheists, and non-Christians. I was originally Mennonite, and at one of our meetings they had many questions about the Mennonites and Amish. We discussed the history of Anabaptists, the Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites, conscientious objection to war, baptism, and many other things. I told them about a Jesus who served the disadvantaged, told us to not be judgmental, healed, and fed the hungry. Their primary understanding of Christianity to that point had been that you are "born again" and accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior. If you didn't do this, you'd go to hell. We discussed misuse of the Bible, like taking any one verse out of context. We discussed the fact that the same Jesus who told Nicodemus in John 3 you must be born again also told the rich young man in Matthew, Mark, and Luke who inquired

about eternal life to keep the commandments, sell all his possessions, and give away his wealth. We don't like giving away all our wealth so we preach being born again. Both taught alone are out of context.

Christians have done much good over the centuries. They have also done much evil. History shows that during the Crusades Christians killed more Muslims than Muslims killed both Christians and Jews. Christians killed each other during many wars. Martin Luther said Anabaptists should be killed, and many were killed or tortured. Today Christian churches are fighting and splitting over an understanding of the scripture and homosexuality. In the past we fought over dress, Sunday school, and other things. I told the men I am going to change from a Christian, which is a label, to try to be more Christ-like, which is a behavior or action. Then I shared with them Christ-like things I observed in their relations with students they taught. The best concept I shared

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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)  
HOLY LAND TOUR with TRACY SPROAT (March 13-21)  
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)  
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (July 23-August 3)  
RUSSIA and UKRAINE: The MENNONITE STORY (September 4-16)  
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)  
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR RICH BUCHER (November 5-14)  
EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

### 2014 TOURS

- THE AMAZON RAINFOREST and GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 16-26)  
EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 15-27)  
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 13-26)



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from the Bible is that God is love.

I found it amazing how receptive the men were to this message. We have been friends for years, and yes, I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is a disservice to the message of Christ to diminish the work of the Holy Spirit in the ways that brothers Myers and Clapper did.

**Denzel Short**  
 Livonia, Mich.

**Wasted time and energy**

I am amazed and disappointed at the large block of time that has been devoted to the issue of homosexuality. Maxine E. Marak asks a very straightforward question: "When will the Church of the Brethren finally look at the real issue regarding homosexuality—fear?" (Letters, July/August 2012) It might be fear (looking through the culture lens), but the real question is this: Is homosexuality a sin according to the Word of God? The whole matter is rather simple to handle. If the Bible says that homosexuality is a sin, and that God is not pleased with that alternative lifestyle, then how do we respond? The culture has already spoken (for the most part) and that's okay. But for the church of Jesus Christ to affirm, encourage, and promote homosexuality or any other sin is inappropriate and not acceptable.

So, what's the problem? Our position on peace does not mean peace at any price. Or does it? Our position as the body of Christ is

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

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to be obedient to his will and to focus on our bringing glory to his name. And, by the way, the scriptures are full of winners and losers. The winners always see the error of their ways, confess, repent, and put Jesus as their Lord. I had to experience that transition in my own life.

For the born-again believer, fear and hate do not really enter the picture. Believers are concerned for the welfare of the lost and the faithfulness of the brothers and sisters they love. If there is any fear in the camp it should be fear (concern) for those who choose to disregard the teaching of God's Word. Eternity is a long time, and no one wants to find themselves in the wrong location for that length of time.

My prayer is that we lay this issue to rest. Too much time and energy has been wasted. There comes a time to chose who is leading whom.

**Jim Powers**  
Osceola, Mo.

### A cover-to-cover reader

This is in response to the letter in the May MESSENGER written by Olden Mitchell. I think it is a serious problem when most of our churches—and pastors—are not interested in reading our church magazine. Two of us in my home church get the MESSENGER. I can't imagine not getting it. I read it from cover to cover and enjoy every page.

Quite some time ago I wrote a letter concerning this problem but I never sent it. I'm so glad Olden Mitchell did! Something needs to be done. What, I'm not sure. But it needs to be addressed by the staff.

**Penny Burket Henry**  
Bedford, Pa.

*[Bless you, Sister Penny. We couldn't agree more. Thank you! -Ed.]*

### Pontius' Puddle



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Church of the Brethren

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## New Members

**Antioch**, Rocky Mount, Va.: Robert Iuppa, Joanna Shipp, Bradley Rayburn, Will Bowman

**Beaver Creek**, Hagerstown, Md.: Olivia-Mae Dunham, Donna Staley, Tammy Staley

**Chiques**, Manheim, Pa.: Roger Pepper, Janet Pepper

**Clover Creek**, Martinsburg, Pa.: Nicholas Glunt, Blair Miller, Jacob Noel, Noah Reighard, Dan Stern, Robin Stern, Geraldine Eicher, Ambrie Dilling, Amber Altmanshofer, Donald Hengst, Wilma Hengst, David Patterson, Jeanette Patterson

**Community of Joy**, Salisbury, Md.: Vicky Barrow, Anna Gresh, Luke Miller

**Creekside**, Elkhart, Ind.: Kevin Prahl, Cal Graber, Stephen Gall, Joy McFadden, Janet Shaver, Karen Eis, Ron Nicodemus, Jan Nicodemus

**Denton**, Md.: Seth Lannon, Kim Bishop, Ashley Nord, Phillip Smith

**Dundalk**, Md.: Francis Gordy

**East Cocalico**, Stevens, Pa.: Kevin Blood, Dianna Blood, Scott Beckman, Debra Beckman

**East Fairview**, Manheim, Pa.: Troy Fawber, Tonya Fawber, Jeffrey Ochoa, Joseph Herneisen, Sr.

**Fairview**, Cordova, Md.: Brenda Bayliss, Bridgette Burke, Scott Burke, Kent Rector, Jody Rector, Carol Ann Mitchell

**Fairview, Mount Clinton**, Harrisonburg, Va.: Jessica Robinson, Joy Robinson,

Kyle Diehl, Iris Hinkle, Tony Hinkle

**Faith Community of the Brethren Home**, New Oxford, Pa.: Susan Rohrbaugh, Karen Alwine Braker

**Franklin Grove**, Ill.: Matt Rittle, Darrell Simpson, Barb Simpson

**Germantown Brick**, Rocky Mount, Va.: Lauren Naff, Peyton Ingram, Hali Saul

**Harrisburg, First**, Harrisburg, Pa.: Jennifer Burkett, Dotti Seitz, Steve Seitz

**Hartville**, Ohio: Jaxom Layman

**Keyser**, W.Va.: Katherine Pezzanite, Tabathia Robinson

**Lancaster**, Pa.: Robert Bingaman, Sally Bingaman

**Leakes Chapel**, Stanley, Va.: Gloria Dovel, Elton Yordy, Sharon Yordy, Ricky Alger, Dakota Alger

**Lewiston**, Maine: Scott Littlefield, Caitlyn Horning, Bethany Clemmer, Susanna Clemmer

**Lititz**, Pa.: Somphop Kongsynonth, Sarah Kongsynonth, Bud Dengler, Jane Dengler, Ryan Martin, Joan Cantrell

**Locust Grove**, New Castle, Ind.: Shane Lemaster, Tina Lemaster, Brook-Lyn Lemaster, Hunter Lemaster, Loyetta R. Burner

**Manassas**, Va.: Dana Cassell, Miranda Gillespie, Louis Harrell, Joe Peters, Gina Peters, A.J. Peters, Thomas Robb, Hannah Robb, Darrell Shaver, James Wambold, Brenda Wambold, Ben Weimer, Tom Yengling, Peggy Yengling

**Maple Grove**, New Paris, Ind.: Daniel Bird, Shelby Bird, Ally Bollinger, James LeCount, Rylee Kirkdorffer

**Mechanic Grove**, Quarryville, Pa.: Karissa Herr, Erik Rasmussen,

Bobbie Davis

**Middle Creek**, Lititz, Pa.: Anne C. Brubaker

**Middlecreek**, Rockwood, Pa.: Austin Bolton, Chase Bolton

**Mill Creek**, Port Republic, Va.: Frank Ritchie

**Mountville**, Pa.: Tammie Mutzabaugh, Cindy Heisey, Sean Geist, Valerie Geist, Stanley Williams, Joyce Williams, Ray Enders, Anna Ruth Enders

**Myersville**, Md.: Nancy Burrell, Marisa Shields

**Paradise**, Smithville, Ohio: Amanda Dowdle, Rachel van Viegen

**Ridgeway Community**, Harrisburg, Pa.: Janet Eisenbise, Sue Goetz

**Rossville**, Ind.: Kevin Seward, Carole Seward, Kurt Schaefer, Cristy Schaefer, Jeremy Wiegand, Allen Weldy, Kim Weldy, Peter Weldy, Lauren Weldy, Michelle Broome, Ryan Pritchett, Carolyn Pritchett

**Rummel**, Windber, Pa.: Pauline Glaze, Kerry Lichtenfels

**Saint Petersburg**, Fla.: Skylar Smith

**Skyridge**, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Holly Lapka

**South Waterloo**, Waterloo, Iowa: Brian Frederick, Cam Frederick, Branden Frederick

**Wabash**, Ind.: Mikayla Genovese, Cohen Marvel, Beatrice Ann Snavely, Lane Tacker

**Washington City**, Washington, D.C.: Nathan Hosler, Jenn Hosler

**Wilmington**, Del.: Brandon M. Hanks, Katrina Hanks

**Woodbury**, Pa.: Tom Foor, Deb Foor, Nick Foor, Mike Shawley, Staci Shawley, Jamie Stiffler

## Anniversaries

**Anderson**, Fred and Elsie, Roanoke, Va., 50

**Anstine**, Harold and Mabel, Hartville, Ohio, 65

**Berkey**, Dennis and Marilyn, Windber, Pa., 60

**Brunk**, Ron and LaDonna,

Ivester, Iowa, 50

**Butterbaugh**, Dwight and Marquita, Mount Morris, Ill., 65

**Christ**, Melvin and Alberta, Lowpoint, Ill., 70

**Daniels**, Felton and Karleen, Modesto, Calif., 50

**Dickason**, Dave and Lowey, South Haven, Mich., 50

**Duncan**, Kenneth and Joyce, Mount Morris, Ill., 50

**Eshbach**, Warren and Theresa, Dover, Pa., 50

**Flora**, Sylvus and Martha, Rocky Mount, Va., 60

**Garland**, Roy and Wilma, Lancaster, Pa., 60

**Gibble**, Lamar and Nancy, Saint Charles, Ill., 60

**Gunn**, Nelson and Ruth K., Dundalk, Md., 50

**Harshbarger**, Jerry and Sharon, Peoria, Ill., 50

**Heck**, James and Jeanne, Lancaster, Pa., 50

**Henderson**, D.L. and Louise, Citronelle, Ala., 50

**Henne**, Kenneth and Sharon, Lees Summit, Mo., 50

**Hess**, George and Sylvia, Xenia, Ohio, 50

**Hoffman**, Bill and Janet, Windber, Pa., 60

**Hoffman**, Don and Marge, Winona, Ohio, 75

**Johannes**, Bennie and Donna, Wilmington, Ohio, 50

**Keeney**, Ray and Sandra, Bethel, Pa., 50

**Kline**, Ronald and Suzanne, Lancaster, Pa., 55

**Lautzenhiser**, Glenn and Glennis, Hartville, Ohio, 60

**Martin**, John and Audrey, Lancaster, Pa., 50

**McGolerick**, John and Ruth, Frederick, Md., 70

**Miller**, Marvin and Carolyn, Sebring, Fla., 55

**Morgan**, Bill and Madeline, Roanoke, Va., 70

**Mueller**, Harold and Romy, Modesto, Calif., 55

**O'Day**, Paul and Barbara, Greenwood, Del., 50

**Phillippy**, Curtis and Fern, Richland, Pa., 60

**Scmalzried**, Richard and Rozan, Quinter, Kan., 50

**Smith**, Carl and Ruth, Bridgewater, Va., 70

**Stern**, Alvin and Ardyth, San Diego, Calif., 55

**Stinebaugh**, Vernon and Angela, Lancaster, Pa., 70

**Strohm**, David and Mary, Modesto, Calif., 55

**Theobald**, Wayne and Ellie, Vicksburg, Mich., 60

**Thomas**, Sheldon and Jean, Davidsville, Pa., 70

**Wallace**, Gene and Jo, Des Moines, Iowa, 60

**Wright**, John and Joyce, Harrisonburg, Va., 50

**Zimmerman**, Roy and Kathryn, Lancaster, Pa., 55

## Deaths

**Aichlmayr**, Julie Ann, 54, Penrose, Colo., June 11

**Arnold**, P. Arthur, 94, Bluffton, Ohio, June 12

**Ashmore**, Nancy B., 91, New Oxford, Pa., July 22

**Bachman**, Marie Evelyn, 96, Des Moines, Iowa, June 25

**Barnhart**, Tommy A., 67, Rocky Mount, Va., May 21

**Basore**, Mabel L. Palmer, 91, Hagerstown, Md., July 17

**Batschelet**, Lois Patricia Flory, 77, Nokesville, Va., July 21, 2011

**Bauchman**, Grace Elsie, 92, Harrisburg, Pa., May 23

**Beach**, Evelyn K., 84, Martinsburg, Pa., May 28

**Bealer**, W. Harold, 95, Lancaster, Pa., June 16

**Beardsworth**, Helen Alford, 99, Waynesboro, Va., June 1

**Beeghly**, Sylvia B., 84, Oakland, Md., May 13

**Bell**, Kathryn E., 89, Sidney, Ohio, March 24

**Blatt**, Richard C., 79, Bethel, Pa., July 5

**Bosserman**, Helen Booz, 86, Sebring, Fla., July 12

**Bower**, John David, 100, McLouth, Kan., June 18

**Bowman**, James Hollace, 102, Rocky Mount, Va., June 14

**Bross**, Carl J., 77, Myerstown, Pa., Feb. 21

**Brubaker**, Curtis Cornelius, 84, Boones Mill, Va., May 12

**Brubaker**, Galen Benjamin, 87, Rocky Mount, Va., June 12

**Buchanan**, James Dewey, Jr., 89, Elkhart, Ind., May 8

- Bulle**, Cora A., 89, Sidney, Ohio, May 26
- Burger**, Anna Elizabeth, 93, Hagerstown, Md., June 19
- Carr**, Leta, 79, Live Oak, Calif., May 25
- Cassel**, Paul H., Sr., 98, New Oxford, Pa., July 14
- Cesal**, Lon, 78, Denton, Md., May 25
- Cook**, Lewis Miller, 95, Bridgewater, Va., July 6
- Coy**, Doris L., 91, Sidney, Ohio, April 20
- Craun**, Dortha Lottie, 101, Bridgewater, Va., May 10
- Crist**, Carole Jeanine, 79, Quinter, Kan., May 2
- Cullison**, Clarence D., 93, Gettysburg, Pa., June 9
- Dickson**, Richard P., 59, McVeytown, Pa., Nov. 30
- DiMatteo**, Robert Bernardo, 94, Palmyra, Pa., May 5
- Domer**, Virginia I., 84, Canton, Ohio, April 11
- Dunlap**, Juanita Belle, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 12
- Durnbaugh**, Richard E., 85, Holly, Mich., July 5
- Edwards**, Floyd H., 85, Johnson City, Tenn., July 15, 2011
- Emerick**, Paul, 88, Bethel, Pa., May 1
- Essick**, Arda D., 91, Des Moines, Iowa, July 2
- Etter**, Thelma L., 75, Palmyra, Pa., April 15
- Eyler**, Peggy Alberta, 84, Falling Waters, W.Va., July 13
- Fields**, Ernest, 87, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 22, 2011
- Flores**, Nina, 20, Lombard, Ill., May 23
- Fox**, Gary Eston, 79, Hagerstown, Md., July 7
- Frantz**, Adeline S., 90, New Oxford, Pa., July 9
- Gardner**, Paul Evans, 79, Montvale, Va., May 8
- Gibson**, Evelyn Virginia, 89, Waynesboro, Va., July 17
- Greg**, Marvin J., 84, Lakeville, Ind., June 1
- Hagginbotham**, Phyllis N., 85, York, Pa., April 4
- Harshman**, Harold David, 89, Mount Airy, Md., June 3
- Heller**, Brigitte Elaine, 51, Boonsboro, Md., June 28
- Hershberger**, Martha A., 87, Quarryville, Pa., May 23
- Hershey**, Wilbur K., 77, Bethel, Pa., April 27
- Hoffman**, Marjorie, 95, Winona, Ohio, June 10
- Hopping**, Evelyn A., 83, Washington, Ill., July 5
- Howard**, Louis Donald, 96, Johnstown, Pa., June 17
- Hughes**, Clarence Leroy, Sr., 87, Sidney, Ohio, June 6
- Hylton**, June Elizabeth Harman, 95, Christiansburg, Va., July 14
- Jackson**, Doris Fae, 89, Norton, Kan., April 1
- Jahnke**, Vernon John, 63, Claremont, Calif., July 13
- Kann**, Richard L., Sr., 78, Newville, Pa., March 29
- Kemp**, Margarete McClain, 91, Frederick, Md., May 3
- Kenepp**, Marlin S., 83, Chambersburg, Pa., Feb. 8
- Keplinger**, Dorothy L., 81, Keyser, W.Va., June 18
- Kimmel**, Lois E., 89, Tyrone, Pa., Feb. 29
- King**, Judy L., 62, Johnstown, Pa., May 24
- Kinsey**, James L., 95, Roanoke, Va., May 15
- Klinedinst**, Beatrice G., 93, New Oxford, Pa., April 20
- Koznoskie**, James T., 74, Harrisburg, Pa., May 18
- Lewis**, Thomas R., 89, Saint Petersburg, Fla., May 24
- Litten**, Benjamin Franklin, 91, Williamsport, Md., May 20
- Maranville**, A. Glenn, 84, Hartville, Ohio, April 22
- Marshall**, Edna Floy, 90, Hillsdale, Pa., May 22
- Marteny**, Lesley C., 90, New Oxford, Pa., June 21
- Matula**, Elsie Berg, 95, Ford City, Pa., June 12
- Maurer**, Beulah E., 90, Rittman, Ohio, Sept. 6, 2011
- McCurdy**, Regina, 65, Beavercreek, Ohio, Feb. 20
- Meyer**, Edward Light, 98, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 13
- Miller**, Mary Naomi, 93, Waynesboro, Va., May 29
- Mose**, Jerry D., 78, Hagerstown, Md., March 24
- Myer**, Donna M., 57, Lancaster, Pa., June 18
- Myers**, LaVonne, 82, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 27
- Myers**, Vanda Ellen Stuckey, 77, Alliance, Ohio, April 8
- Neideigh**, Velma I., 90, Winterset, Iowa, May 14
- Neighbors**, Robert L., 82, Kansas City, Mo., April 7
- Odenwelder**, Darlene B., 73, Troutville, Va., May 31
- Ott**, Luther Ernest, 90, Windber, Pa., June 19
- Ritchey**, Wynnedith von Wehrden, 91, Bedford, Pa., May 31
- Schrock**, Marilyn M., 74, Orrville, Ohio, June 25
- Schwawinger**, Eugene Spedden, 95, Trappe, Md., June 1
- Shearmire**, Ray, 81, Garden City, Kan., June 25
- Shepherd**, Sandra Brubaker, 67, Live Oak, Calif., Feb. 20
- Shetler**, LaRue, 87, Kittanning, Pa., March 29
- Smith**, Barbara J., 89, Newton, Kan., May 26
- Smith**, Naomi, 85, Columbia, Pa., April 5
- Snell**, Lisa H., 59, McPherson, Kan., May 10
- Spreen**, Wolfgang, 67, Middleburg, Fla., July 17
- Stambaugh**, Eleanor C., 95, Lancaster, Pa., May 7
- Stermer**, Melvin O., 96, Hartville, Ohio, March 27
- Stouffer**, Dorothy M., 81, Chambersburg, Pa., June 11
- Sutton**, Charlie C., 95, McPherson, Kan., May 24
- Tammel**, Donne D., 85, Harmony, Minn., Sept. 14, 2011
- Trostle**, Donald L., 84, Lancaster, Pa., June 22
- Waggy**, Arlie, 92, Goshen, Ind., July 9
- Walborn**, Edna E., 97, Palmyra, Pa., April 14
- Warner**, Ray E., 103, Eden, N.C., June 8
- Watkins**, Ruth Eleanor, 91, New Paris, Ind., June 25
- Weaver**, Flora Harsh, 92, Palmyra, Pa., April 29
- Weaver**, Glenn Martin, 61, Palmyra, Pa., Oct. 31, 2011
- Wentling**, Amy, 99, Syracuse, N.Y., Jan. 14
- Wentling**, Esther L., 95, Annville, Pa., May 24
- Whitcomb**, Richard E., 87, Mechanicsburg, Pa., April 24
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# Getting back on track?

Watching events unfold at Annual Conference in St. Louis this summer, I couldn't help but be impressed. We Brethren, by and large, were behaving ourselves. It was a refreshing and welcome sight—especially in light of our performance last year in Grand Rapids.

What caused the change? While observing one of the business sessions I pondered possible reasons. Seating delegates at round tables may have had something to do with it. In a setting like that, you can't help but notice that, despite our many differences, we really do have some things in common. We love potlucks. We sing in four-part harmony. And a large percentage of us wear plaid. I also



RANDY MILLER  
MESSENGER Editor

think a tip of the hat must go to moderator Tim Harvey, who presided over the proceedings with calm efficiency, infusing the sessions with an air of dignity, decency, and respect—pretty impressive for a guy who spends his spare time riding around on a unicycle.

But I think we also were a little embarrassed by what went on a year ago, and we really wanted to demonstrate that that's not the way Brethren

behave. It seemed as if we wanted to show that we're better than that. Still, I had to wonder: How much of that was real and how much was just window dressing? It made me think of a passage from travel writer Paul Theroux's book *The*

among adults, rather upright and formal and wooden, because as soon as they loosen their grip or have one beer too many they slip into leering familiarity and all hell breaks loose. What you took to be good manners was simply the forced, self-conscious behavior of someone holding on. Much of the time Australians had the exaggerated and unconvincing manners of drunks pretending to be sober."

Were we "Aussie Brethren" in St. Louis, minding our manners for the sake of appearance while quietly questioning the faith of others in attendance? Were we pulling our punches while the cameras were on, so to speak, only to disparage our fellow Brethren when we thought no one was looking?

The Aussie comparison may be a bit off the mark for us. (For one thing, we don't drink beer.) But I'm hoping that, since Grand Rapids, we Brethren, despite our disagreements, may have genuinely learned to behave ourselves and treat one another with at least a modicum of respect. I'm hoping that's the case—that we caught ourselves in the nick of time. We forgot who we were for a moment but have now snapped back to the people we're meant to be: decent, salt-of-the-earth, service-oriented, peace-loving folks who treat one another with respect and kindness.

That's the kind of people I've always thought we were. Those are the Brethren I encountered at Annual Conference when I was a kid. And I found myself feeling optimistic that we might have turned a corner in St. Louis and are getting back on track. Granted, it might not be the quick turn some hope for—it may be less like an Indy car cornering a curve

I FOUND MYSELF FEELING OPTIMISTIC THAT WE MIGHT HAVE TURNED A CORNER IN ST. LOUIS AND **ARE GETTING BACK ON TRACK.**

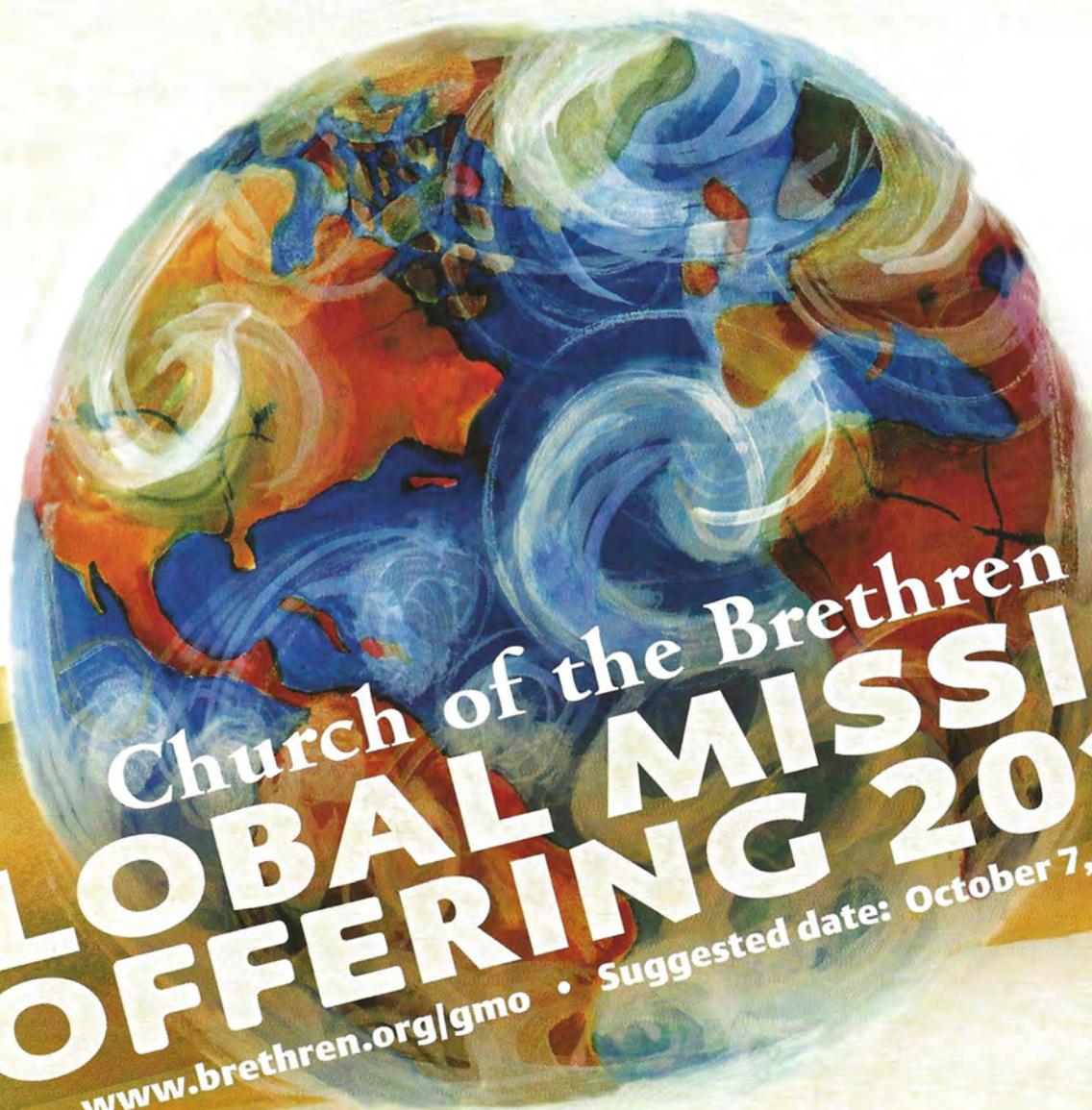
*Happy Isles of Oceania—Paddling the Pacific* in which, during a book tour in Australia, he begins to notice something curious about the citizens of that country.

"Australians (it seemed to me) were people who appeared to be at ease when in fact they were simply controlling their emotions, and being on good behavior, because the slightest relaxation of this stiffened vigilance would have them howling. They were like people who had only recently been domesticated, like youths in their late teens sitting

and more like a sea-going barge rounding a reef. Still, I want to hang onto that glimmer of hope that I, and I think others, witnessed at this year's Conference.

We are a gentle, loving people, as the hymn goes, and a justice-seeking people in a land of many colors. We have been that kind of people historically and, although some claim we have lost our way in recent years, we have it in our denominational genes to be that still. Did we begin to see a return to that this year in St. Louis? I hope so. **ZU**

**COMING IN OCTOBER:** The Ethiopian eunuch, what holds Brethren together, Bible study, media review, reflections, letters, and more.



Church of the Brethren

# GLOBAL MISSION OFFERING 2012

[www.brethren.org/gmo](http://www.brethren.org/gmo) • Suggested date: October 7, 2012

All this is from God, who **reconciled us to himself through Christ,**  
**and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,** that is, in Christ  
God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against  
them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

Church of the Brethren 

November 16-18, 2012  
Lititz Church of the Brethren,  
Lititz, Pa.



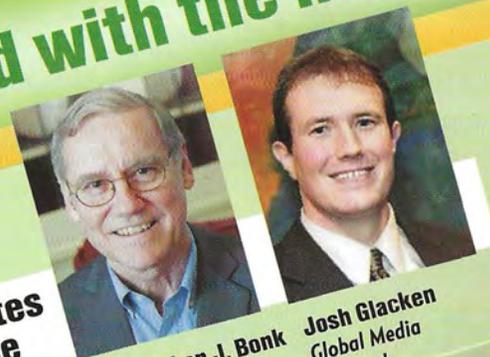
# MISSION ALIVE 2012

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (NRSV)

**Ambassadors for Christ** Entrusted with the message

The Church of the Brethren  
missions conference

**Keynotes  
include**



**Dr. Jonathan J. Bonk**  
Overseas Ministries  
Study Center

**Josh Glacken**  
Global Media  
Outreach



Church of the Brethren

## Mission Alive 2012 Registration

Register online at [www.brethren.org/missionalive2012](http://www.brethren.org/missionalive2012) or complete the form below.

Write your check to Church of the Brethren. Address the envelope to Anna Emrick, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We need childcare for \_\_\_\_\_ children (**must pre-register**)

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

### Housing Registration

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not need housing. I will make my own arrangements.

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to stay in a home stay. (Please complete all information below.)

Gender: M  F

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Number in party (max. 5): \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies of any in party: \_\_\_\_\_

I have interest in the Global Mission Advocate Network (GMAN).

Special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

I am hearing impaired.  I am visually impaired.

### Registration type:

- Full conference \$65 before October 1, 2012/ \$75 thereafter
- Friday only \$40
- Saturday only \$40
- Student (High school, college, or seminary) \$50
- Family full conference \$150
- CEU credit (add \$10 to the registration cost per ordained person.)
- Total cost

Preferences (we will do our best to accommodate, but cannot guarantee):

- Female only host
- Male only host
- No children in the house
- No pets in the house
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

