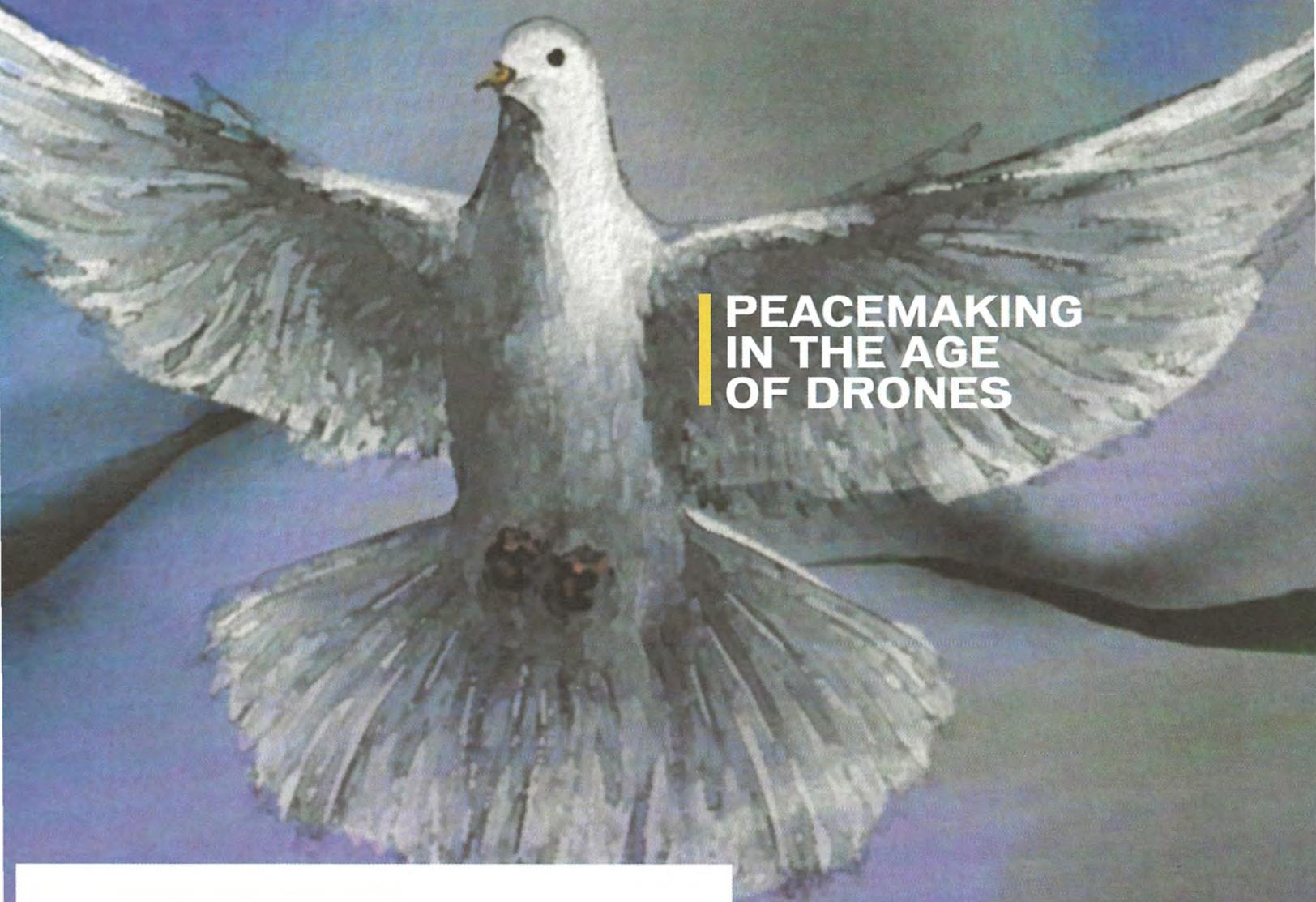


CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



**PEACEMAKING
IN THE AGE
OF DRONES**

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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8 Which gun would Jesus own?

The December massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School has brought gun control to the front pages of America once again. While pundits and politicians wrangle over the legal right to bear arms, many Christians are weighing in on the moral aspects, asking, "What would the Prince of Peace say about the matter?" Guns did not exist when Jesus walked the earth but, based on his life and teachings, where might he come down on this issue?

12 Killing at a distance—drones and the Incarnation

At its 1935 Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren delegate body declared that "all war is sin." But war in 2013 isn't what it was in 1935. In 1935 there were no drones, or UAVS (unmanned aerial vehicles). Killing today can be done from half-way around the planet by a person in an air-conditioned office. Some suggest it is time for us to reconsider what it means to witness for peace in a new age of war.



15 Sitting in silence with Job

Job didn't need answers, he needed friends. He needed fellow believers who could help carry his burden. But his friends—well-meaning though they may have been—thought otherwise.

18 Drawing us into the community of peace

Jesus comes to draw us into a community of peace. Too often our discourse is based on our own fears of survival, our worries of keeping the doors open, rather than guiding people in asking questions that generate community. Jesus reveals the power of God that stands in the gap created by fear.



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

Too late. I had just popped the square of chocolate into my mouth when I realized it came with instructions.

The package listed five steps, each explained by a sentence or two: Breathe. See. Smell. Snap. Taste. Clearly this exotic (and it truly was) chocolate bar was meant to be savored. I can't say that I followed every step for each



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

square, but I did slow down. From that point on, I remembered to contemplate each bite.

Breathe. See. Smell. Snap. Taste. Those words would also work for fresh-picked beans or peas. The instructions would change slightly for warm bread: Breathe. Smell. Slice. Spread. Taste. For the sunset that was almost missed: Stop. Watch. Wait. Exhale. Praise. For that sober front-page newspaper article: Read. Ponder. Pray. Or for the acquaintance you're rushing past: Stop. Listen. Listen again.

There is no limit to the opportunities to slow down and pay attention, no limit to the places where a word of instruction would remind us to pause. If we keep practicing, we might find ourselves more keenly attuned to the mystery of God and the life that we have been given.

"Contemplation is a sudden gift of awareness," writes Thomas Merton (*New Seeds of Contemplation*, p. 3).

"It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness, and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source. Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source" (p. 1).

My spiritual type is not mystical or contemplative. But I'm not devoid of contemplative impulses, and Lent seems like a good time to follow them. Breathe. See. Hear. Pray. And give thanks to the God who meets us in the desert.

Wendy McFadden

The Practice of Paying Attention, by Dana Cassell, is the Brethren Press devotional for Lent. It is available from www.brethrenpress.com or by calling 800-441-3712. Find a follow-up question and prayer for each devotional on the Church of the Brethren blog at blog.brethren.org.

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Frederick church sends 100 emergency buckets for Sandy relief

In some ways the weekend worship services at Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren on Dec. 8 and 9 were not unusual. The praise bands and bell choir worshiped through music, an Advent drama was performed, and a sermon was preached at each of the four hearing services. The difference this weekend was that there were 100 five-gallon blue buckets in the background for all of it.

These 100 buckets were filled earlier that week when a group of Frederick Brethren stocked them with cleaning supplies to be sent out as Emergency Clean-up Buckets for Hurricane Sandy relief. Each of the previous three weekends, church attendees were asked to bring specific items to be put into the buckets. The rest of the supplies were provided by the church as a way to reach out and serve those recovering from the disaster.

All 100 buckets were delivered to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., to be sent to Church World Service (CWS). CWS posts the required supply list on their website and collects the buckets because "these supplies enable people to begin the overwhelming job of cleaning up after a flood, hurricane, tornado, or other disaster here in the United States" (www.churchworldservice.org).

To see the video of these buckets being filled, "100 Buckets in 100 Seconds," go to the Frederick Church of the Brethren page on Facebook: www.facebook.com/FrederickCOB.



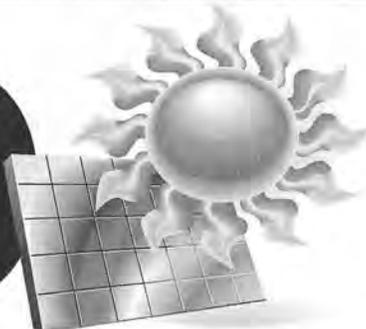
Members of Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren prepare emergency buckets for Hurricane Sandy relief.



Congregation Close-Up

by the numbers

50



Number of megawatt hours (MWh) of clean solar energy Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., has committed to purchase annually from Keystone Solar Project in Lancaster, Pa., for the next seven years as part of a college-wide initiative to reduce its carbon footprint

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.

New Covenant church extends the Lord's table

When the small New Covenant Church of the Brethren in Gotha, Fla., gathers to observe the Love Feast, its numbers are increased and the fellowship enriched by the inclusion of members of the Chain of Love congregation.

Both congregations meet in the chapel at Camp Ithiel. New Covenant's Sunday school and worship services are held on Sunday mornings. When members leave the chapel after noon, they greet the Chain of Love members who are arriving for their afternoon service.

In recent years the New Covenant congregation has invited the African-American Chain of Love congregation to join them in the Love Feast. At first it was a new experience for the Chain of Love folk to include footwashing and a simple meal as part of the observance of communion. It has been a positive experience for everyone to be a part of the inter-racial, multi-generational worship.

The Love Feast service is led by pastor Stephen Horrell

or one of the other ordained ministers in the New Covenant congregation. Pastor Larry McCurdy, the Chain of Love pastor, leads part of the worship. Members of both

congregations are asked to read scriptures. The singing during the footwashing part of the service includes music from the faith backgrounds of both groups.

Nancy Knepper, an ordained minister who is moderator of the New Covenant congregation, led the Nov. 4 Love Feast. She reminded those who were gathered that there are varied meanings of the words "feet" and "feast."

The rich fellowship of the Love Feast made it a memorable experience. The fellowship

continued after the service ended, as members of both congregations cleared tables and folded them up so that the chapel chairs could be set up in the arrangement that is familiar to both groups.—**Berwyn L. Oltman**

Berwyn L. Oltman is an ordained minister and a former district executive for Atlantic Southeast District.

Photo by Phil Grout



Serving others

Their yarn spans the globe

Peaceknits is a charity knitting and crocheting group that meets the first and third Mondays of the month at Bedford (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. "In preparing for the group's Christmas lunch on Dec. 14, a tally was made of what the group has donated since its beginnings in 2008," reported the Middle Pennsylvania District newsletter. "Peaceknits has hand made 405 items from donated yarn and given them to: Bedford UPMC Hospital, World Vision, Bedford County Children and Youth Services, Your Safe Haven, Special Olympics, a refugee center in Istanbul, the children of Alakanuk, Alaska, and Hurricane Sandy victims."



Turkey Creek gives to Nigerian Brethren

Turkey Creek Church of the Brethren in Nappanee, Ind., contributed \$10,000 to the Compassion Fund of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) out of moneys made available as the congregation merged with Nappanee (Ind.) Church of the Brethren.

Former pastor Roger Eberly and his wife, Mim, took part in a goodwill delegation to Nigeria in January 2010, hearing stories of the violence that Nigerian Brethren have suffered. Since then, the couple have followed the news from Nigeria. As they began hearing of increased violence recently, Eberly said the time seemed right for such a gift.

Ironically, Nappanee was started as a “daughter” church to Turkey Creek, Eberly said, adding that Turkey Creek “came to a greying time” after a vibrant history in which it planted several daughter congregations. The opportunity to make significant gifts has helped make the congregation’s move more meaningful.

Among other gifts made by Turkey Creek, which met for worship for the last time on Sept. 30, 2012, is a donation to help Camp Mack rebuild key facilities lost to a fire in 2010, a Bethany Seminary scholarship for students studying church planting, and gifts to a number of other organizations including Heifer International and Habitat.

Contributions to the EYN Compassion Fund and words of encouragement for Nigerian Brethren may be offered online at www.brethren.org/EYNcompassion or sent by mail to Church of the Brethren, Attn: EYN Compassion Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Carrying on without their ‘mountain man’

Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren held a special “Mountain Mission Trip” dedicated to Jim Harshbarger, who suddenly passed away the afternoon after loading his truck for the trip. The Illinois and Wisconsin District newsletter reported that for many years he had promoted the trip to the congregation and spent many hours driving around the area collecting donations of furniture, appliances, household items, and clothing to contribute to the annual trip to missions in Eastern Kentucky. “There was a noticeable empty space in the caravan this year,” the report said. “Even though Jim was missing, his son David, and grandsons Dylan and Randy, took over the helm of Jim’s GMC/Ford truck and trailer to make the trip in his dad’s memory.”



LANDMARKS and laurels

➔ Celebration of **Cloverdale (Va.) Church of the Brethren’s** centennial started on Dec. 16, when James Flora was guest speaker for worship. Flora was called into ministry by the Cloverdale congregation in the late 1940s. Additional anniversary events will include Cloverdale hosting the Roanoke-area Brethren Lenten services known as “Awakening” in March. On May 5, Church of the Brethren general secretary Stanley Noffsinger will speak for worship. The “big” anniversary weekend will be July 5-7. On Dec. 22, 2013, the congregation will mark 100 years since the dedication of the original meetinghouse.

➔ **Central Church of the Brethren** in Roanoke, Va., was represented at a Homeless Person’s Memorial Service at Greene Memorial United Methodist Church, as part of the Congregations in Action effort. “Even more exciting was the presence of eight Highland Park Elementary School students, and the entire Highland Park faculty, who came in support of Congregations in Action and their students,” reported pastor Tim Harvey. Harvey delivered the sermon for the service. The *Roanoke Times* reported on the event, which remembered the 21 homeless residents of Roanoke who died in the past year (go to www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/318278). “Some were welders and constructions workers,” Harvey wrote. “Some held master’s degrees. All were created in the image of God.”

Remembered

Ruby Sheldon died on Nov. 28, 2012. A member of Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, she is remembered as a noted woman pilot who in 2010 at age 92 was “only” 70 years older than the younger pilots in the 34th annual “Air Race Classic” in which some 100 women pilots flew 2,000 miles in four days from Fort Myers, Fla., to the Mississippi River and back to Frederick, Md. After many years as an Air Race Classic Director, she was made an Air Race Classic Honorary Director by her peers. She was one of the top 10 finishers of the race in 2008, 2005, 2002, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995 (when she won first place), and many more years. An aviation pioneer, flight instructor, and charter pilot, she was inducted into the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame in 2009. “We have also experienced Ruby as an active member of Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren,” said the district note. “Attending and helping at past district conferences. Encouraging all of us. Hosting District Board members in her home. Thank you Ruby for being a light on our path.”

Embracing Brethren values

In 1891, the University of La Verne was founded by members of the Church of the Brethren. Although the university is now independent, it is still deeply rooted in the church's basic principles. Two-and-a-half years ago, when I applied for the position as president of the university, I must admit I had little familiarity with the church and its founding values. However, after researching the university and coming to campus, I became eager to learn more about the heritage and sustained connection the church still has with this campus community.



DEVORAH LIEBERMAN

Today, having settled into the presidency, I am convinced that this is an institution that lives and breathes its mission daily, with core values inextricably linked to the values of the Brethren who founded it. These values center on sending students into the world who demonstrate lifelong commitment to: 1) the importance of diversity/inclusivity, 2) community and civic engagement, 3) lifelong learning, and 4) ethical reasoning.

The faculty and staff at La Verne believe so fully in the mission and values that we have now designed and implemented “The La Verne Experience”—a curriculum and co-

We wanted our students to know that to be a La Verne Leopard means to embrace the idea of giving back to the communities around us: locally, regionally, and globally. Beach clean-ups, feeding the homeless, and assisting the elderly were just some of the ways our students participated; and we have projects which continue throughout the year to provide additional opportunities. By involving our students with hands-on community engagement activities, we reinforce and celebrate this Brethren tradition. It also is important that these activities are connected to course content so that students understand that community engagement cannot be separated from academics or future professions.

Staff and professors participate in community engagement activities along with our students. You see, La Verne's ethos attracts a certain type of professor, who in turn guides our student population. Our faculty generally takes the “path less followed,” allowing for more expressions of success than a traditionally prescribed, ladder-scaling path. Students are gently influenced into reconsidering what “being in the world” means to their human and spiritual development. I am impressed when speaking to graduating students at their willingness to be people of integrity aligned with a larger purpose than simply serving themselves. This is one way a “Brethren education” quietly impacts our students.

The core values that the Church of the Brethren represents

Students are gently influenced into reconsidering what “being in the world” means to their human and spiritual development.

curriculum that instill in our students the values and skills to be global citizens, make a positive difference in the world, and to live one's life by the ethos that surrounded them throughout their college career. The connection to the values of the Church of the Brethren founders is evident in all parts of the La Verne Experience. This includes a commitment to ethical and moral living, valuing inclusivity, and service to all—all ways that, throughout the years, Brethren have approached living and serving.

Regardless of one's Brethren or non-Brethren upbringing, the heritage of the church has shaped our institution's mission and has allowed for possibilities of success in affirming and life-shaping ways.

One example is our community and civic engagement efforts. Last summer, during Freshman Orientation weekend, more than 600 freshman—before they even stepped foot into their first college class—participated in Civic Engagement Day.

mirror those of La Verne. Our campus is fortunate to have its Brethren heritage and distinctive philosophy of education, emphasizing the importance of nurturing while advancing. If more institutions of higher education would follow this model, I predict that we would have an educated workforce that would better serve society overall by competitively filling the entire workforce with employees committed to advancing careers and concurrently improving the lives of others.

I often tell the story of how La Verne's mission statement and core values helped me make the decision to apply for the presidential position. The core values of La Verne and of the Church of the Brethren are the same values that surround my own home, with my own family. My goal is that La Verne imparts this deep-abiding foundation to its students today and for years to come. 

Devorah Lieberman is president of the University of La Verne, in La Verne, Calif.

We're called to be ministers of reconciliation, not of accusation.

—Gregory Boyd, American theologian, author, and senior pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., in a Dec. 18 Twitter message

cultureview

“The nones who actually are holding American Christianity back are those who shout ‘NONE!’ when asked what they would allow to change so that their congregations could be more effective.”

—Tom Ehrich, founder of the Church Wellness Project and author of *Just Wondering, Jesus*

“If the followers of Jesus are committed to making the Kingdom of God a reality here on earth then we need to heed the words of our hero, the Prince of Peace, and consider how we move our country from a culture of violence to a culture of peace.”

—Dan Webster, Episcopal priest and member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, in his Religion News Service article, “The ‘Christian’ answer to gun violence? Eliminate guns”

“It’s unsettling for a movement that’s lasted 2,000 years to now find that, ‘Oh, some of the things we always assumed would connect with the community aren’t connecting.’”

—Warren Bird, director of research for the Leadership Network, a firm that tracks church trends

▶ **As bells tolled Dec. 21** in memory of lives lost in Newtown, Conn., religious leaders gathered outside the Washington National Cathedral to push congressants and Congress to prevent further gun violence. “Is the need for sensible gun control a religious issue?” asked Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. “Indeed it is, for our worship of guns is a form of idolatry.”

▶ **More than a third of Americans** believe the severity of recent natural disasters is evidence that we are in the “end times” described in the New Testament. “There is a significant proportion of Americans who see these phenomena through a theological lens,” said Daniel Cox, research director at the Public Religion Research Institute, which released a poll in December on religion and climate change in partnership with Religion News

Service. The conviction is particularly strong among white evangelical Protestants (65 percent), and less common among Catholics (21 percent) and the religiously unaffiliated (15 percent).

▶ **“Capital punishment is becoming marginalized and meaningless** in most of the country,” said Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, which released a new study on the death penalty in December. “In 2012, fewer states have the death penalty, fewer carried out executions, and death sentences and executions were clustered in a small number of states,” Dieter said.

▶ **The number of people who identify as Christians** in England and Wales has fallen by 4 million over the last 10 years according to new figures from the 2011 Census. The data shows that numbers fell from 37.3 million in 2001 to 33 million in 2011.

Heard 'round the world



“A new year is like a trip. With the light and the grace of God, may it be the start of a path to peace for every person, every family, every country, and for the entire world.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, in his New Year’s message from St. Peter’s Basilica

“Everyone in this city seems to be in terror of the gun lobby. But I believe the gun lobby is no match for the cross lobby.”

—Gary Hall, dean of Washington National Cathedral



Graffiti on a wall in Seattle, Wash. Photo by Steve Mohundro

Which gun would Jesus own?

by Frank Ramirez

I heard about the December massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., while driving a van back to Pennsylvania from Washington, D.C. Our church's women's fellowship group had traveled there to work at a soup kitchen for the homeless. Cell phones went off like crazy. Websites were consulted. The full impact hit us like a load of bricks.

The Brethren response to disaster is to "do something," and we were on our way home after doing something in response to hunger and homelessness. But what could be done in the face of the Newtown tragedy? The idea that, in this case, there was apparently nothing to be done goes against the Brethren grain. In the case of one more mass murder intensified

by the presence of high-powered weaponry, people wondered what possible "something" could anyone do, other than to weep and pray?

Like many ministers, I rewrote my sermon for that Sunday. Scripture recognizes the presence of senseless evil in the world. Certainly the slaughter of the innocents by Herod the Great fits into that category.

When the Magi did not return to Herod after visiting the infant Jesus, the paranoid ruler ordered the murder of all male children under the age of 2. Under no circumstances should we consider this atrocity necessary to God's plan of salvation.

In Matthew's Gospel, the Greek word *hina*, which means "in order to," is used again and again to demonstrate that a certain action occurs "in order to fulfill

the scriptures.” But here there is no *hina*. This atrocity was not necessary in order to fulfill the scripture. God’s word recognizes there are times when there is weeping and mourning and none can comfort us, and in this case the slaughter fulfills a scripture, but it was not necessary for it to happen. It is not God’s will.

God’s great gamble of granting us free will means that it is possible for a Dan West to conceive of Heifer Project, but it also means that if a mentally ill person has access to weapons of great destruction, innocent people may die, whether at a shopping mall in Arizona, a movie theater in Colorado, or an elementary school in Connecticut.

God is weeping with us as surely as God wept with those parents 2,000 years ago. And God’s great plan of salvation was not deterred then, nor will it be now.

Yes, once again mental illness played a part in a shooting tragedy. But when it comes to “doing something,” some of us have to question whether the sort of

dialogue over the centuries to determine what the scripture would have said about very important issues if they had been directly addressed. Brethren have followed that tradition. We study God’s word together and discuss—or argue—until we reach a consensus.

God’s people were not very advanced technologically, compared to their neighbors, and that extended to weaponry. The Israelites and Judeans engaged in wars, but we see in Judges that weapons were often improvised. Ehud sharpened a stick for his interview with a foreign king, and it was his “disability” (he was left-handed) that enabled him to hide that very simple weapon. Gideon’s secret weapon involved lighting torches, blowing horns, and smashing pottery. Jael conquered a king with a little winky-pie and a little wiggly wag, then cut off the king’s head.

The real debate about the necessity of arms began in the second century before Jesus. The author of the book of Daniel used stories of non-resistance during

God is weeping with us as surely as God wept with those parents 2,000 years ago. And God’s great plan of salvation was not deterred then, nor will it be now.

high-powered weaponry that is too easily available in our society should be available at all.

Not all of us, however.

Seven days after the horror, the National Rifle Association’s executive vice-president Wayne LaPierre said something with which most gun owners I have spoken to do not agree: “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”

I do not accept that statement. It is not biblical. It is not true.

Which brings us back to the question about the “something” we Brethren believe we ought to be doing.

I am reluctant to write anything at all on this topic because for the most part people are simply unable to hear each other. However, I am equally unwilling to say nothing. Which eventually brought me to consider the question: “Which gun would Jesus own?”

Scripture does not specifically mention guns because there weren’t any. But Talmudic rabbis have engaged in

the Babylonian Exile to promote the viewpoint of the “wise ones” that the appropriate response to violence is to trust in God. Daniel 12:1 assures us that Michael will rise and settle our enemies’ hash. A few verses later in Daniel 12:3 we read, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

The author of the apocryphal book Second Maccabees, written during the same era, used the stories of the martyrs to demonstrate that nonviolence was the best response to the religious persecution and attempted theological genocide by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Dying for one’s cause was more efficacious than killing others for it. Vengeance is God’s job, which is the prelude to the statement in Leviticus 19:18 quoted by Jesus, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

By contrast, the author of First Maccabees subscribed to the doctrine that the best way to solve your

problem was to smash heads together. The author of that book made no mention of the martyrs that both Daniel and 2 Maccabees were aware of and celebrated. Of course his military solution ultimately led nowhere as the victors fell apart in fractious infighting and ultimately fell back into political subjugation.

All of which is a prelude to the uncompromising words of Jesus: love your enemy, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who persecute you—you know, that whole Sermon on the Mount thing about turning the other cheek, which Jesus actually does, as you may remember. Jesus also said he could have called down legions of angels if he

chose, but he told his disciples to put away their swords and not resist.

And this is why the apostle Paul quoted Proverbs 25:21-22 when he wrote:

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21).

During the Radical Reformation, Mennonites and other Anabaptists were tortured and brutally murdered by other Christians in the name of Jesus for their refusal to make baptism anything but an adult choice, for meeting in their homes for Bible study, and for suggesting that the words of Jesus might actually have to be taken seriously. American Brethren also were martyred for their faith as recently as the early 20th century. Our Nigerian Brethren continue to face persecution and death today.

We in the Anabaptist tradition can be guilty of verbal violence, alas, but we don't kill each other, or others. So how are we as Brethren to respond to situations like Sandy Hook? Are we to do nothing in the face of evil? Are we to stand by while children are mown down by gunfire? No, never. The educators who died (remember this the next time you hear someone talk about those no-good teachers who don't deserve a pay raise) did what every teacher I know would do—sacrifice their lives for their children.

One way to resist is by insisting on more money for mental health treatment, which means taxes to pay for it all. In addition, we can actively resist the notion that there is nothing we can do about guns designed for no other purpose than to kill humans wholesale. (Yes, I know that people can commit murder with a butter knife, but they can't kill as many people as quickly and as easily, and you don't reload a butter knife with another multi-round chamber.)

So what about guns in general? I don't believe the scriptures prohibit us from owning guns. Indeed, Brethren own guns in larger proportions than the American population at large. They always have. Why? Many Brethren are farmers, or else live in rural areas and small towns. Guns are tools. They're used for hunting, and for blasting varmints. They're not meant to be used on people. There is the story of one Brethren fellow in Colonial America named Jacob Neff who shot and killed an Indian in self-defense. He was forgiven by his people for the shooting but was later disfellowshipped because he kept bragging about it. (See *Brethren in Colonial America*, 147-149.)



I don't own a gun, but I pastor in a region where hunting is an essential part of our culture. . . . For the past 11 winters I have written an annual *Blessing of the Hunters litany* for use in our Thanksgiving Sunday worship service.



A responsible citizenry should be able to distinguish between the legitimate uses of firearms and the need for a well-funded *gun industry with a powerful lobby* to sell guns to people who already own guns again and again and again.

I don't own a gun, but I pastor in a region where hunting is an essential part of our culture. Mothers teach their sons and fathers teach their daughters how to handle guns, and how to hunt. The gun safety program for youth is a rite of passage here. The Monday after Thanksgiving is a school holiday because it is the first day of deer season. Trophies are prized, to be sure, but hunting is for food, and freezers are filled because of the hunt. For the past 11 winters I have written an annual Blessing of the Hunters litany for use in our Thanksgiving Sunday worship service. We stress our place in God's creation, practicing gun safety, conservation of resources such as the herd, and our own place in the great circle of life.

Many of the hunters I speak with are troubled by this obsession about the right or "need" to own semi-automatic weapons. No self-respecting hunter would use such a weapon to kill a deer, or even a pesky critter that's been in the corn.

In Bible study, we place great value on the original context of a verse or passage. The original context of the Second Amendment is based on colonial experience. Guns were necessary for ordinary uses in life. The right to own a gun was also essential for the well-being of the new nation because there was no standing army. We now have a well-regulated militia. It's called the Armed Forces. The original need for a well-armed citizenry—which is why that essential first clause of the Second Amendment was written—no longer exists. Note that nowhere are gangsters and machine-guns and crazed individuals armed to the teeth in public

settings mentioned in the Second Amendment—they didn't exist. A responsible citizenry should be able to distinguish between the legitimate uses of firearms and the need for a well-funded gun industry with a powerful lobby to sell guns to people who already own guns again and again and again.

In the end, these terrible weapons are in private hands, and often are eventually used on other human beings. Then we are told that the guns are not at fault. I am not convinced of this. There always will be crazed, unbalanced, mentally disturbed people, but the fact is they can't kill as many people with a rock, a knife, or even a regular hunting rifle, as they can with semi-automatic weapons and backpacks full of ammunition clips.

Which brings me back to the real question: Which gun would Jesus own? We already know Jesus would not aim it at another human being, not even a Roman soldier or a temple guard. Can you picture Jesus with a semi-automatic weapon?

I think Jesus would recognize the need for an agricultural society to bear arms for hunting purposes, and for protection against various dangerous creatures. A 21st century Jesus living in a rural area like I do might own a good, old-fashioned rifle, the kind that can be found in every home in Middle Pennsylvania, locked in a glass case, well cared for, owned and operated responsibly. And I think Jesus would insist we share the venison with the poor and hungry, a la Matthew 25, just as people do where I live. [ZZ](#)

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



Killing at a distance

DRONES AND THE INCARNATION

by Nathan Hosler and Bryan Hanger

On display at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum near our office in Washington, D.C., is a large display of drones.

Though some of these machines have caused hundreds of deaths—many of which are civilians—there is no mention of the activity of war, people and families killed, or other ethical considerations. These are presented simply as machines—machines that just happen to be designed for remote killing.

Primitive drone technology has been around since the end of World War I, but until recently drones were never a primary means of surveillance or attacking. The technology was too expensive and not effective enough to be widely used. This was still the case until the 1980s, when technological advances produced the first prototype of what is now known as the Predator drone.

Now, thanks to rapidly advancing technology and a well-funded defense industry, drones have become an increasingly institutionalized part of America's foreign policy. Although the shift toward drones is still ongoing, it is worth noting how dramatic this shift has been. According to *The Washington Post*, "The military had less than 200 drones the day before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001" (*The Washington Post*: "Rise of the Drone: From California Garage to Multibillion-dollar Defense Industry," by Peter Finn). It is now thought that the United States' growing drone arsenal hovers somewhere around the 8,000 mark (*The Week*: "The rise of drone warfare by the numbers" by Harold Maass).

It is important to note that the majority of drones in use are unarmed and used for surveillance, but an increasing amount of armed drones are becoming a central component of how the

The central issue here is that there is such little transparency to the whole process, and the *human cost of drone warfare has largely been ignored and hidden.*

CIA and the US military act in and monitor conflicts across the world. The central issue here is that there is such little transparency to the whole process, and the human cost of drone warfare has largely been ignored and hidden.

All drones are sin?

As a denomination, the Church of the Brethren consistently has stated that it is against all war, and urges its members and the government to work diligently for the good of all. In 1918, at our Annual Conference, we stated, "We believe that war or any participation in war is wrong and incompatible with the spirit, example, and teachings of Jesus Christ."

In 1934, Annual Conference resolved that all war is sin by saying, "We, therefore, cannot encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad. We cannot, in the event of war, accept military service or support the military machine in any capacity."

Since we have made such overarching statements, why discuss the use of drones for remote warfare?

Well, despite these resolute anti-war statements, the Church of the Brethren has a membership that is rather divided on the issue of war. Carl Bowman, in his *Portrait of a People: The Church of the Brethren at 300*, found that 44 percent of Church of the Brethren members he surveyed rejected the Brethren position that "all war is sin." Even though a narrow majority still supports the notion, it is remarkable that nearly half of the members surveyed rejected one of the core beliefs of the church.

Given these realities, and given the skyrocketing use of armed drones, it seems appropriate to address the matter now.

Distance and dehumanization of the enemy

We are primarily concerned with what are technically called Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles, or armed drones. These drones are controlled and directed by military operators here in the United States who monitor the location of suspected militants across the world via the drones' surveillance technology. These particular drones have been widely used in conflict areas such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia, and they are equipped with lethal missiles that can be fired by these long-distance operators. The MQ-1 Predator drone, the MQ-1C Grey Eagle, and the MQ-9 Reaper drone are the three main types of armed drones used by the CIA and US military.

We are concerned not only with the incredible increase in use of these weapons, but also the lack of transparency and devastating results that accompany their use.

Tactical drone attacks began in 2002 with a failed strike in Afghanistan that left a few innocent Afghani men dead (*Living under Drones* by Stanford Law School/NYU School of Law, p. 10). The botched strike was reportedly meant to take out Osama Bin Laden, but in retrospect it serves as the first sign of the lethal danger of this new type of warfare.

In the decade since, the tally of humans killed by drone strikes has grown to almost 3,000 people (*The Washington Post*: "Plan for hunting terrorists signals US intends to keep adding names to kill lists," by Greg Miller). Many different casualty statistics are out there, some of them higher than 3,000 and some of them lower, but all of the figures remain partially speculative. This is the case because information and statistics still have to be pieced together through domestic and foreign news reports because of the lack of transparency provided by our federal government.

The number of innocent civilians killed is even harder to come by, but a publication called *Living under Drones* gives an exhaustive report of the effects of drones on the areas they target. As an example, in Pakistan alone, the report indicates that between 474 and 881 civilians, including 176 children, were killed from June 2004 through September 2012 (p. VI). In contrast, Washington says that the drone program produces zero to few civilian casualties, and that these few casualties are exceedingly rare (NBC News: "US official acknowledges drone strikes, says civilian deaths exceedingly rare" by Michael Isikoff). Both of these estimates cannot be accurate, but even if the correct number is somewhere in the middle of the two figures, this is a tragic reality that cannot be ignored.

In addition to this, the Obama administration claims to have certain principles and guidelines that are used to determine who is targeted and when strikes are carried out, and reportedly even attempted to codify and institutionalize some regulations and principles into a sort of drone rulebook (*The New York Times*: "Election spurred a move to codify US drone policy," by Scott Shane). However, these rules have never been made public, and the administration has never admitted wrongdoing or apologized for any innocents killed despite myriad reports of innocent loss. As of writing this, President Obama and chief counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan still have the final say on who is targeted and when, and they still have no legitimate oversight reining them in.

Even if seemingly objective standards were set up, the strikes are still administered by humans and are remotely killing other humans. When we do things at a greater distance we tend to forget that these are actual people with actual families. Children still fall and cry. Parents still fret about paying bills or their children's ability to find work when they leave school. The distance and disconnectedness that drone warfare provides may dull us to this reality, but the fact remains: humans are still humans no matter how they are targeted.

Call of the church

As a denomination, we have made much of following the way of Jesus. Our tagline puts it succinctly: "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

Jesus is the ultimate argument for the humanization that comes from doing things face to face. Something changes when we are up close. Up close we see eyes, we remember humanity. God, being God, presumably could have interacted

strikes happen. This kind of warfare creates a volatile environment where accountability is limited, violence is ever-increasing, and no end is in sight. Though all killing mocks the God who creates and gives life, performing a strike on a distant village and then going home to one's family or a child's baseball game seems particularly detached and questionable. Granted, this distance may not change anything officially within conventional military strategizing or theory. But intentionally increasing distance from the communities targeted is likely to decrease hesitancy and aversion to killing. Indeed part of military training is overcoming this seemingly innate aversion to taking the life of another human being.

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, the author of *On Killing*, is particularly illuminating on the military psychology of killing. Essentially, military training goes to great lengths to create a desensitized environment where killing becomes mundane and commonplace. This dehumanization of the enemy allows for emotional and moral detachment that creates enough distance for soldiers to, as Grossman says, "think the unthink-

The distance and disconnectedness that drone warfare provides may dull us to this reality, but the fact remains: *humans are still humans no matter how they are targeted.*

with humanity in a number of ways, but "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). Jesus moved into the neighborhood. The incarnation points to the ultimate transcendent—God—becoming immanent in Jesus.

To say that something is gained by being close does not necessarily prove, however, that the inverse is true—that something is lost by being faraway and distant. The rules of formal logic do not necessitate this. In the case of human lives and relationships, however, this does seem to be true. Some even argue that the image of God found in humanity may actually be relationality. This idea draws on social trinitarian theology. Being created in the image of God, which includes the relational elements of the Trinity, means that humans are *necessarily* relational. Relationships are not just something nice on good days, but are intrinsic to who we are.

If "Jesus moved into the neighborhood" in order reconcile us to God and to each other, and if we as an integral part of our existence are relational, then decisions about peace or war, healing or hurting, should not be done apart from the experience of the actual people. People, whether they are recipients of a program to end poverty, or the victims of a military strike, should be seen as people.

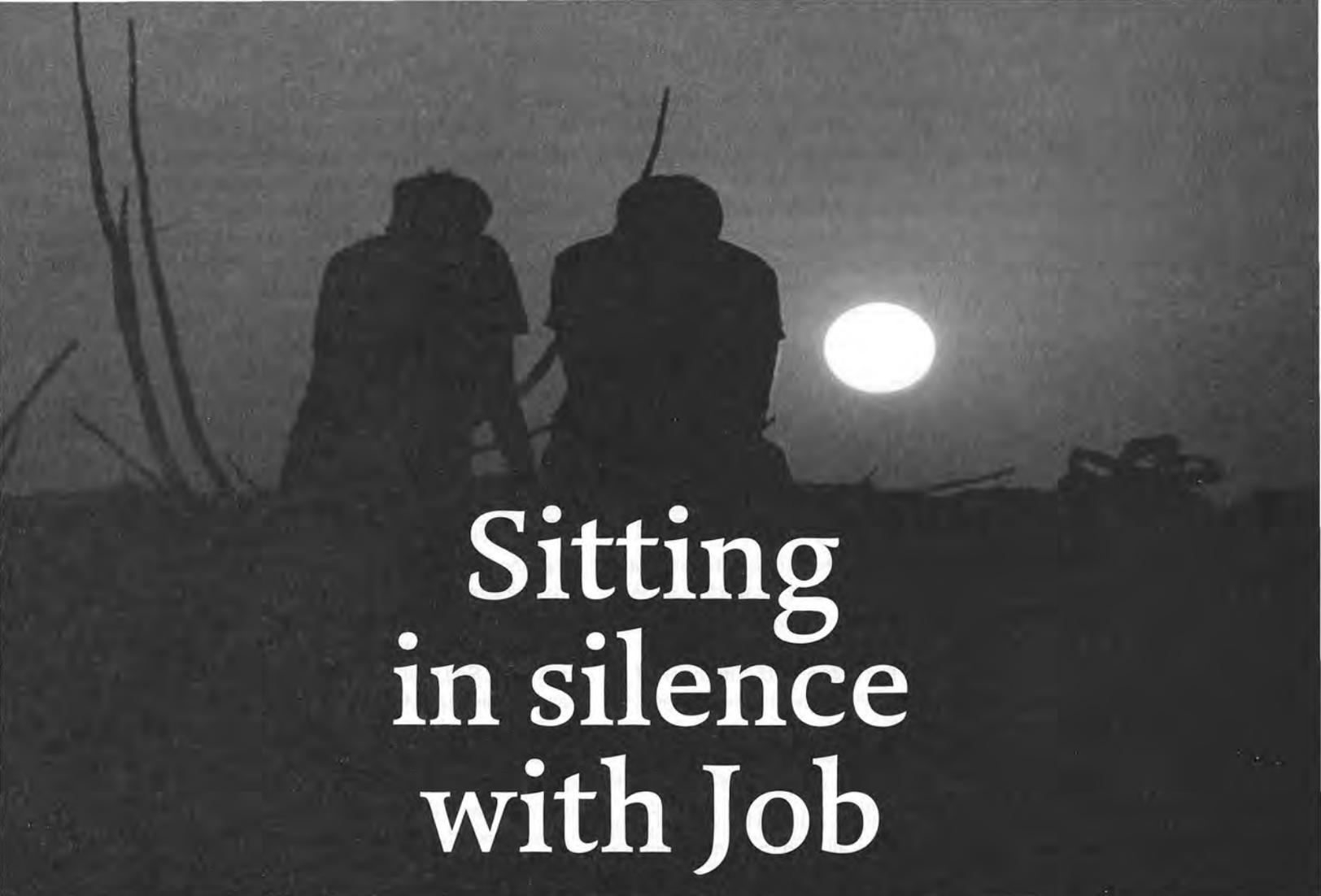
While we are opposed to all killing, the use of drones moves us further down the path of detaching our decisions for the use of lethal force from the communities in which these

able." This type of detachment becomes more troubling when what Grossman refers to as "mechanical distance" enters the picture. This mechanical distance is killing via screens or other forms of technology, which emulate video game-like environments (*On Killing*, by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, p. 160). Drone warfare is the ultimate embodiment of all of these disturbing issues. Quite simply, the dynamics and effects of drone warfare foretell a world where violence will only be further separated from human emotion and morality.

Thus, we are left with the sharp contrast between the intentional dehumanization or distancing from people and the incarnation, Immanuel—God with us—found in the coming and ministry of Jesus. The former is in preparation to take life, while the latter is the giving of life. As a denomination, and as individuals who proclaim to follow the "giver of life," we are called to embrace that which gives life—both in this age and the age to come. **W**

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Sitting in silence with Job

by Christy Waltersdorff

Job is sitting on a trash heap mourning the deaths of his many children and farmhands, and shell-shocked by the horrible things that have happened in his life. About all he has left are his wife and his own damaged physical body.

But word of Job's situation has spread, and three friends have come to see him. Their visit started out well.

When these three first saw their friend, they didn't recognize him. Gone was the cheerful, prosperous, generous, faithful guy they knew. In his place was an angry, deformed man who barely looked human. They cried out in lament, ripped their own clothing, and sat with him, right there in the garbage dump. For seven days and nights they sat in silence, in communion, with their grieving friend. They kept him company and comforted him with their presence.

Those seven days of silence were the best gift they could have given to their friend. Then they started talking, and things began to change.

Here is how theologian Frederick Buechner, in his book, *Peculiar Treasures*, describes the visit from the well-meaning but insufferable friends who came to cheer up Job and try to explain why such terrible things had happened. "They said that anybody with enough sense to come in out of the rain knew that God was just. They said that anybody

old enough to spell his own name knew that since God was just, God made bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people. They said that, such being the case, you didn't need a Harvard diploma to figure out that since bad things had happened to Job, then he must have done something bad himself."

But Job knew he had not done anything bad or wrong or sinful and therefore he shouldn't be suffering so terribly. "In the theological economy of Job's former world, the suffering of a genuinely righteous person was mathematically impossible," says Emory University professor Thomas Long in "Job: Second Thoughts in the Land of Uz," published in the April 1988 issue of *Theology Today*.

Buechner calls the friends a bunch of theological quacks and says the smartest thing they could have done was shut up. Along with Job, the three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—engaged the most unbearable questions of faith. Why do bad things happen to good people? Where is God in the midst of suffering?

The three friends represented the traditional faith of their times. From their experience and their study of the religious tradition, they knew these things to be true: obedience to God yields prosperity and disobedience yields suffering. This is the box within which they lived.

Anything outside that box must be edited, reformatted, and cut down to fit. Job didn't fit and he refused to be edited or reformatted.

The friends were bound and determined to uphold the tradition at all costs. They seemed to think it was up to them to protect God's reputation as a just God. Job, on the other hand, had nothing left to lose. Everything he thought

mind. You are lucky that God has scolded you." His advice? "If I were you, I would pray. . . . Make peace with God; you will not be sorry." The result? "Everything you do will succeed and light will shine on your path."

For Eliphaz, the power of prayer was a bargaining chip, peace with God a negotiating device. He did not have faith; he had a religious vending machine. His response to the question: How do we live when our experience is at odds with our religious tradition? Deny the experience. Even though Eliphaz knew Job to be a righteous man, seeing the shape his friend was in could only lead to the conclusion that Job was a first class moral failure. He even accused Job of stealing

Job raged against the supposed wisdom of those who think they have God all figured out when, in reality, they had *no idea at all who God is*.

he knew, everything he was so certain to be true, was suddenly not true at all. The foundation of his world had been kicked out from under him. He was struggling to understand. He was struggling to find truth that would help make sense of his despair. The reality of his life stood in stark contrast to the traditional explanations of religion, and he demanded some answers.

In *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*, theologian Ellen Davis writes:

"From a theological standpoint, Job and his visitors have much common ground. They all hold the same belief system; they are committed to the idea that the universe operates according to a system of fairness. The initial point of difference between Job and the others is that Job identifies a glitch in the system: he maintains that he is being punished in gross disproportion to any wrong he ever did. Although they begin with the same theological principle, Job and his would-be counselors develop it in very different ways. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are academic theologians of the most speculative kind. They imagine they can read God like a book, and so they presume to tell Job precisely what God is doing, namely, disciplining or punishing him. But Job refuses to buy into their pat theories. Job will do his theological thinking at the top of his lungs, directing his shouts to God's face."

The three visitors made the same mistake many of us make when we are in their position. They tried to figure out how to make sense of the situation, to explain why it happened. Our role as comforters is not to solve the problem of pain; it is not to stick up for God. Our job is to comfort, to sit in silence, to lament injustice, to bandage the wounds, and to cry out for relief.

In his book, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith*, Thomas Long gives a character sketch of each of the friends. Eliphaz, he writes, is the embodiment of a mushy brand of self-serving piety. Eliphaz surveyed Job's situation and then gazed heavenward, telling himself and Job that it was all an illusion. "Sin has seduced your

from the poor, refusing to provide food and drink to those who were hungry and thirsty, throwing poor widows to the wolves, and crushing orphans. Eliphaz could not believe in Job's innocence because if he did, everything he believed to be true about God would come crashing down. He preferred to sacrifice his friend for his own brand of theology.

The second argument came from Bildad, the religious authoritarian. Long introduces him this way: "He has a bumper sticker on his car that reads, 'God said it. I believe it. That's that.' He views human nature as a bowl of spoiled mayonnaise, describing humanity as 'that worm, that vile, stinking maggot.'"

Bildad was the kind of person who believes that horrors like AIDS and earthquakes are well-deserved punishments for sin. Such tragedies would even have made him feel justified in his beliefs and maybe even glad. Bildad told Job, "Your children must have sinned against God, and so God gave them what they deserved." Long writes, "Bildad stands there like an iron rod, his shoes spit-shined and every hair carefully combed, insisting that it never rains on the righteous, even while his neatly pressed suit is getting drenched by the downpour."

The third visitor was Zophar, whom Long describes as a Bildad who has gone to seminary. He shared Bildad's rigid view of sin and punishment, but had learned to intellectualize it. He told the suffering Job that there are many sides to wisdom. He thought Job's problem was a lack of clarity—Job didn't understand that he was a sinner. He lectured his friend on the doctrine of evil, but he was pessimistic about Job's chances of really getting it. "A stupid man will be wise," he quipped, "when a cow gives birth to a zebra."

Zophar charged Job with forgetting the difference between the limited wisdom accessible to humans and the infinite depth and hiddenness of divine wisdom. He seemed to forget, however, that he himself was limited by that difference and proceeded to tell Job what God would say if God were to speak. According to Zophar, God would say, "Job is guilty!"

Job did not take all of this wisdom and advice sitting down. In one of his responses to Zophar, he said, "I'm sure you speak for all the experts, and when you die there'll be no one left to tell us how to live. Silence is your only claim to wisdom."

Job was anything but patient with these men whom he called, "miserable windbags." His speeches in response to their arrogant lectures are at times moving, occasionally hilarious, and always passionate. Job admitted that at one time he may have stood where they stood. He could spout proverbs with the best of them. But his experience had shaken his understanding of God and the world. His innocent suffering had knocked him out of that little theological box and he could no longer accept the easy piety of the others.

Just as everyone began to wind down, another voice piped up. This was Elihu. Here is Long's description:

"Elihu is cradling his latest-generation smartphone, and his designer jeans are so fashionably faded that they hide the fact that they come from K-Mart. His beard is a failed attempt to disguise his youth. He knows this, and so he begins, 'I am young and you are old, so I was afraid to tell you what I think, but now that these three so-called sages have utterly failed, someone from my generation is just going to have to step in to straighten out this mess.'"

It took Elihu six long-winded chapters to have his say which, in the end, was really the same thing the other three said. He spoke with the arrogance of one who believed he was the first to discover such theological gems.

Former pastor and writer Eugene Peterson believes that the book of Job is not only a witness to the dignity of

helped him navigate the mystery of God. They should have helped him to find God sitting right next to him in the garbage dump. It makes me wonder if Job's friends really knew him, if they really knew what kind of person he was. They were pretty quick to believe the worst about him when it conflicted with their dearly held religious beliefs.

Job constantly asserted his innocence, and we know he was innocent. The first two chapters of this book set the scene as a wager in heaven in which Job was an innocent pawn. So while the miserable comforters were blaming Job for his difficulties, we know—and Job knew—he was innocent. Most importantly, God knew Job was innocent. Job never doubted the presence of God; what he doubted was the sincerity of his visitors.

What is so unfortunate about Job's encounter with these four so-called religious experts is that their ignorance lives on. Even today we think we have to have all the answers. We think we have to explain God and protect God's reputation. We think everyone has to believe exactly the same way we believe.

Sometimes we just need a friend to sit and cry with us; sometimes, in the midst of life's pain, we just need the church to help us keep breathing. Instead, we often get a lecture, a sermon, an angry diatribe about why we don't deserve God's love.

Instead of barging into a situation they knew nothing about and pronouncing Job guilty, the four friends should have taken his side, they should have bound up his wounds, and cried out for justice for his sake.



Job didn't need answers. *He needed friends.* He needed fellow believers who could help carry his burden.

suffering and God's presence in our suffering, it is also our primary biblical protest against religion that has been reduced to explanations or answers. He believes that many of the answers that Job's so-called friends gave him are technically true. But it is the "technical" part that ruins them. They were answers without personal relationship, intellect without intimacy. And Job, rightly so, raged against this secularized wisdom that had lost touch with the living realities of God. Job raged against the supposed wisdom of those who thought they had God all figured out when, in reality, they had no idea at all who God is.

Instead of focusing on what Job must have done wrong to inherit so much suffering, his friends should have simply entered into his suffering with him. They should have

Job didn't need answers. He needed friends. He needed fellow believers who could help carry his burden; he needed sisters and brothers in the faith to ask the questions he couldn't articulate; he needed someone to cry with him and for him.

"Then they sat with him on the ground. Seven days and nights they sat there without saying a word. They could see how rotten he felt, how deeply he was suffering" (*The Message*).

With friends like these, we will truly see the face of God. 

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Head of Demon by Michael Vrabel, 1890

Drawing us into the community of peace by Chris Keating

The places are etched on our hearts.

Two gunmen enter Columbine High School in suburban Denver. A mass murderer leaves a deadly trail at Virginia Tech. A pair of snipers sends Washington, D.C., into high alert. In Tucson, a congresswoman is gunned down while meeting constituents. Sikhs in Milwaukee are attacked while worshipping. Movie-goers are shot in Aurora, Colo. First graders in Newtown, Conn., are massacred as they start their school day. Add to that countless more random attacks across the world, because tragedy knows no boundaries.

We know these locations too well.

In response, we create strategies of containment. Fearful of shooters, we lock down schools. We establish gun-free zones, even though about half of the homes in the United States have weapons. When tragedy occurs, it is best if we secure the scene immediately.

While some of these strategies are helpful—improved gun laws, better mental health resources, safer schools—Jesus proposes another response. He comes, as Mark's Gospel tells us, announcing that the "kingdom of God has come near" (Luke 10:9). He offers a creative response to the fragmented, isolating ways of violence. He comes in the fulfillment of time, gathering God's people in from isolation.

Jesus comes to draw us into the community of peace. This is also a location we should know, and it is described in the story of a man shunned by his community as a result of violence.

In Mark 5:1-20, Jesus travels into Gentile territory, where he encounters a man with an unclean spirit. Matthew (8:28-34) and Luke (8:26-39) each tell the story a bit differently, but all three describe a man possessed by a demon. While the exact location of the story is unclear, Mark's version highlights the man's isolation. He is surrounded by wild places: tombs, mountains, and the sea.

Mark's account of this story is vivid and energetic. As soon as Jesus steps off the boat in the land of the Gerasenes, he is greeted by a man haunted by great demons. He's an outcast, a man feared by the community. His condition has caused him to wound not only himself, but also the neighborhood. Afraid of his outrageous strength, members of the community try to keep him bound in chains.

Yet containment will not work. "No one had the strength to subdue him," Mark tells us. "Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones." Isolation is the only way to preserve peace.

Brethren scholar Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm notes that few of us are comfortable with stories of demon possession and exor-

cism. As she suggests, while we may avoid this story, it holds the potential to surprise us. Listening to it suggests important insights into Jesus' message of peace for the people of God. The story declares God's power proclaimed through Jesus' act of healing and reconciliation. The one who has dwelled among the dead is eventually brought back to the land of the living.

But for now, he remains isolated. The demons have even stripped him of his name, and his identity remains hidden. He is the man parents tell their children to avoid at all costs, a wild monster who must be excluded.

Whenever violence besets a community, a climate of fear descends like ominous storm clouds. Each time gun violence has disrupted our world, we see fear fracturing community. Like the legion of demons, fear strips away our identity as God's children. The Sikhs who were killed in Milwaukee were often erroneously identified as Muslim extremists. Following the Newtown, Conn., shootings in December, schools across the nation practiced lockdown drills and intruder alerts. Suspicious individuals were closely watched. Officials discussed arming teachers and bringing guns into schools. The price we pay for fear is great.

Out of their fear, the village removed the man from their midst, taking away his identity, his home, his family. He has no name, though Mark calls the demons "legion," which is an intriguing military reference. In telling the story, perhaps Mark is referring to Roman soldiers, a reference his audience would have well understood.

The man growls at Jesus: "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" It's not clear what this means. Is he trying to dissuade Jesus from injuring him, or is he curious why Jesus has come to find him? Perhaps he might just want to be left alone.

But Jesus does not dismiss his question. Instead, he engages the man in a conversation which ultimately leads to his healing

but at the root is a loss of community. Better laws and increased treatment for mental health are necessary, but so is a vision of God's kingdom of reconciliation.

More and more, I believe the church's call is to be a peaceable community where God's people can ask honest, community-building questions such as "What have you to do with me, Jesus?" Too often our discourse is based on our own fears of survival, our worries of keeping the doors open, rather than guiding people in asking questions that generate community.

In his book *Next Stop, Reloville*, journalist Peter Kilborn explores the lives of professionals whose rise up the corporate ladder translates into frequent moves. He examines how "relos" often land in similar communities and belong to similar kinds of churches, yet never know where they truly belong:

Relos don't have accents. Wherever they go, they don't belong. Their kids don't know where they are from. Relos don't know where their funerals will be or who might come. They might value close family ties and deep friendships and keep parents' and siblings' pictures on their computer and refrigerator, but they see them only for the ritual week at the beach. . . . At Reloville megachurches, which rival Las Vegas for their pyrotechnic stage craft and showmanship, none of the parishioners acknowledged me. Then I noticed that no one acknowledged anyone. (Peter Kilborn, *Next Stop, Reloville*, Times Books, 2009, p. 5)

In fear, the Gerasene villagers refuse to acknowledge the man. Even at the end, when they find him sitting with Jesus, "clothed and in his right mind," they are still afraid. They beg Jesus to leave. Having witnessed a power even greater than the wild man's antics, they cannot fathom the notion of reconciliation. They will continue to pay for their fear.

As the story ends, the man begs to get in the boat with Jesus.

When we dwell in fear, refusing to ask questions or deal with those who are different from us, the demons will only persist. The torments will continue. The violence will increase.

and restoration to community. Jesus remains open to his questions. He reveals the power of God that stands in the gap created by fear. He offers God's love that restores health and brings peace. The message of the gospel is clear: God is at work in the world, overcoming the powers of violence.

Jesus drives away fear, sending the demons squealing like pigs down a cliff.

When we dwell in fear, refusing to ask questions or deal with those who are different from us, the demons will only persist. The torments will continue. The violence will increase. There are legions of problems associated with gun violence,

But Jesus refuses, sending him back to the community so that he can proclaim God's mercy. He sends him back to the place where he belongs.

Like each of us, the man is called to proclaim all that God has done for him. Sent back to be with his family, he soon will discover the answer to his deepest question: "What have you to do with me, Jesus?" ❧

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A group of Church of the Brethren leaders joined American Baptist Churches leaders in a joint ecumenical delegation to Israel and Palestine in December.

Brethren join Baptists in delegation to Holy Land

Church of the Brethren leaders returned from a December visit to Israel and Palestine with a renewed commitment to a place sacred to the Brethren faith tradition, and a call for the expression of love to all the people involved in the violent struggles ongoing in the Middle East. The group consisted of Brethren leaders and a group from the American Baptist Churches USA.

Along with Church of the Brethren general secretary Stanley Noffsinger and his wife, Debbie Noffsinger, and associate general secretary Mary Jo Flory-Steury and her husband, Mark Flory-Steury, the group included Keith Goering, Andy Hamilton, and Pam Reist of the Mission and Ministry Board. The total number in the ecumenical delegation was 16, including American Baptist general secretary Roy Medley.

In addition to an opportunity for a first-hand view of the situation in Israel and Palestine, and chances to meet and talk with people on all sides of the conflict there, Noffsinger and Flory-Steury emphasized the value of renewing relationships with the American Baptists. The two denominations have a long history of working together.



“If there is to be real peace, it will come not from political peace processes but by the faithful determination to love one’s neighbors.”

Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board member Andrew Hamilton, in a blog post following his recent visit to Israel and Palestine with a delegation of Brethren and American Baptists

Support to Nigeria in the face of violence

American Brethren are making efforts to support and encourage Nigerian Brethren affected by violence in that African country, with an increase in outreach occurring following the shooting of a Nigerian Brethren pastor and 10 church members in late 2012. Annual Conference moderator Bob Krouse has announced a season of prayer for Nigeria.

Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer is inviting American Brethren to offer words of encouragement to Nigerian families who have suffered loss, and is requesting contributions to the Compassion Fund of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). The Compassion Fund was initiated by EYN as a mechanism for Nigerian Brethren to demonstrate mutuality in support of one another, with a primary focus of supporting the surviving spouses of clergy who have been killed in the terrorist-type violence that has rocked northern Nigeria in recent years.

Contributions to the EYN Compassion Fund and words of encouragement for Nigerian Brethren may be offered online at www.brethren.org/EYNcompassion or sent by mail to Church of the Brethren, Attn: EYN Compassion Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



Disaster Ministries celebrate completed projects in Pulaski

Brethren Disaster Ministries started its Pulaski, Va., project site in August 2011. Since then, several hundred volunteers have given their time to help rebuild what two tornadoes tore down in April of that year.

Thanks to willing volunteers, donors, the town of Pulaski, and First Christian Church, Brethren Disaster Ministries was able to rebuild 10 houses and repair numerous others.

In November, the work in Pulaski was completed, and on Nov. 14, more than 100 people flocked to First Christian Church to celebrate.

Following a welcome from First Christian Church, mayor Jeff Worrell thanked the volunteers. "A person only has one hometown, and Pulaski is mine. To see it laid low like it was on April 8, 2011, and then over the past 18 months to see it all come back . . . overwhelms me. . . . There is no way we could have recovered from the tornado without this group."

Worrell surprised Brethren Disaster Ministries with a check for \$10,000 from First Christian Church. The church had decided to "pay it forward" to the next project of Brethren Disaster Ministries, so that the Brethren could continue to rebuild towns like Pulaski.

"The word 'no' isn't in this church's vocabulary," said Zach Wolgemuth, associate director for Brethren Disaster Ministries, as he thanked them for the contribution. "Everything BDM needed they managed to provide."—**Hallie Pilcher**

Hallie Pilcher is serving at Brethren Disaster Ministries through Brethren Volunteer Service.

Brethren express sorrow after shooting

In a call made from Jerusalem Dec. 14, Church of the Brethren general secretary Stanley Noffsinger expressed his deep sorrow upon hearing the news of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. The news reached Noffsinger while he and a group of Brethren were in Israel, as part of an ecumenical delegation (see related story).

Noffsinger commented on how news of the school shooting had a profound effect on all in the delegation, who heard about the shooting after spending an evening at the Wailing Wall praying for peace for all people. The next morning they had prayer together with the American Baptist members of the delegation. "From the Holy City we send prayers," Noffsinger said.

Vital Ministry Journey now open to all

Vital Ministry Journey, an emerging effort of Congregational Life Ministries, offers a new way for denominational staff to partner with congregations and districts in building holistic health. The effort is built around conversation, Bible study, prayer, and storytelling. Initially developed with Middle Pennsylvania District, other districts and congregations across the denomination are now considering implementing it as well.

Denominational staff are looking for churches and districts that are ready to grow in mission vitality. Practices supporting the process include coaching, training, networking, mutual support, and the

cultivation of shared mission among congregations.

Middle Pennsylvania District launched the process in September. "The district invited congregations to the (launch) event to learn more about the process," reported Stan Dueck, director of Transforming Practices for the Church of the Brethren. "Twenty-three congregations were represented at the event with an attendance of more than 80 people. Since the launch, there have been two training sessions for the internal coaches who will be paired with participating churches in the district's Vital Ministry Journey process."

Find more information and a video about the Vital Ministry Journey, visit www.brethren.org/congregationalife/vmj/about.html. Contact Stan Dueck at sdueck@brethren.org or Congregational Life Ministries executive director Jonathan Shively at jshively@brethren.org.



Vital Ministry Journey

upcoming events

Jan. 20-24 Council of District Executives winter meeting, Cocoa Beach, Fla.

Jan. 21 Martin Luther King day, Church of the Brethren offices are closed

Jan. 27-Feb. 15 Brethren Volunteer Service winter unit orientation, Camp Ithiel, Gotha, Fla.

Feb. 3 Service Sunday, for resources go to www.brethren.org/bvs/files

Feb. 13 Ash Wednesday

Feb. 17 First Sunday of Lent

Feb. 18-21 Children's Disaster Services workshop, Norcross, Ga., in partnership with a United Methodist Disaster Academy

Feb. 24 Second Sunday of Lent

March 1 **ENGAGE**, an event for prospective students at Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

March 3 Third Sunday of Lent

March 4-8 Brethren Volunteer Service mid-year retreat

March 8-11 Mission and Ministry Board spring meeting, Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, Ill.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Herman D. Kauffman has retired as Northern Indiana District executive minister, as of the end of 2012. He began his ministry with the district on Nov. 1, 1994, and served as district executive for 18 years. He was ordained in June 1976 at Maple Grove Church of the Brethren in New Paris, Ind. He is a graduate of Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., and Bethany Theological Seminary. His call into ministry included a number of summer chaplaincy, student, and intern ministries, followed by pastorates in Indiana, Ohio, and

Pennsylvania. After retirement, he plans to continue living in Nappanee, Ind., while exploring future possibilities including part-time ministry or local volunteer opportunities.

Carl and Roxane Hill have been named seconded staff to Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). They will teach at Kulp Bible College, on the headquarters compound of EYN. In Nigeria, they join Carol Smith who is serving as a Church of the Brethren teacher at the EYN Secondary School.

Jocelyn Snyder of Hartville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren has begun work in South Sudan through

Brethren Volunteer Service. She is working in the area of Yei with a focus on HIV/AIDS and as a youth minister. In South Sudan, she joins two other Church of the Brethren program volunteers: Jillian Foerster, who is serving with RECONCILE, and Athanasus Ungang, working to establish and build a new Brethren Mission Center in the town of Torit.

Bob Gross has been named development director for On Earth Peace. As part of a leadership transition process planned in 2010, he has moved from the role of executive director to this new position. This change took place during the past summer, as Bill Scheurer assumed executive director responsibilities at On Earth Peace.

Elizabeth Schallert has been named development assistant by On Earth Peace. Since May of 2011, she has been assisting in a variety of development-related projects. She holds a master's degree in social work, with a focus in community development, and resides in North Manchester, Ind.

John N. Snader has succeeded Gary N. Clouser as president and CEO of the Brethren Village retirement community in Lancaster, Pa. He began as the community's president on Nov. 19, moving from previous employment as senior vice president for Customer Experience at Ephrata (Pa.) Community Hospital. He is a member of Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

James Troha is named new president of Juniata College

James Troha, vice president for institutional advancement and university relations at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, since 2009, has been named the 12th president of Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.

Troha will begin his official duties on or about June 1. He takes over the presidency from Thomas R. Kepple Jr., who has served as president of Juniata since 1998. Kepple will retire on May 31.

Troha comes to Juniata after a successful executive career at Heidelberg with responsibilities that have included directing all elements of the institution's fundraising, marketing, and university relations efforts. Troha took leadership in organizing, writing, and launching Heidelberg's Academic Comprehensive Campaign for Excellence, the first of its kind for the university. He also served as Heidelberg's interim president for a year, 2008-09.





Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 299 begins work

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 299 has begun work after completing orientation in October:

First row (from left): **Hannah**

Button-Harrison of Ames, Iowa, will serve at the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C. **Jocelyn Snyder** of Hartville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren will serve with the African Inland Church Secondary School of Torit, South Sudan, in a seconded position with the Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service. **Lena Deutschkaemer** of Unterkirnach, Germany, is working at the Family Abuse Center in Waco, Texas. **Tricia Ziegler** of Sebring (Fla.) Church of the Brethren, is working with the Workcamp Ministry at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. **Adam Braun** of Pleasant Dale Church of the Brethren in Decatur, Ind., is with Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md.

Second row: **Rebecca Jolliff** of Newberg, Ore., is going to the Center on Conscience and War in Washington, D.C. **Kayla Robbins** of Wolgamuth Church of the Brethren in Dillsburg, Pa., will work for the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund in Washington. **Kirsten Stopher** of Archbold, Ohio, will work at Abbé Pierre Emmaüs Center in Esteville, France. **Krista Mauger** of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren in Quarryville, Pa., is at the Family Abuse Center in Waco. **Hannah Monroe** of University Park Church of the Brethren



in Hyattsville, Md., will go to the L'Arche community in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Third row: **Rayce Reynoldson** of Antelope Park Church of the Brethren in Lincoln, Neb., is serving at Camp Courageous in Monticello, Iowa. **Nicole Sprenger** of Altenmedingen, Germany, is with Project PLASE in Baltimore, Md. **Sophie Thomas** of Westminster, Md., is going to the New Community Project in Harrisonburg, Va. **Michelle Geus** of Leverkusen, Germany, is serving at the Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati, Ohio. **Merle Koester** of Koenigsutter, Germany, is working at the Family Abuse Center in Waco.

Fourth row: **Jan Hunsenger** of Kamp-Bornhofen, Germany, will serve with Human Solutions in Portland, Ore. **Chloe Hockley** of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, will work at Cincinnati

(Ohio) Church of the Brethren. **Katie Cummings** of Summit Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater, Va., is with the Church of the Brethren Workcamp Ministry. **Rebekka Adelberger** of Velbert, Germany, will serve with Sisters of the Road in Portland, Ore. **Bryan Hanger** of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., is an intern at the Church of the Brethren Advocacy and Peace Witness office in Washington, D.C.

Fifth row: **Nils Kohm** of Wiesloch, Germany, will serve with Project PLASE in Baltimore. **Dennis Droll** of Buehl, Germany, is at the Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati. **Frederik Blum** of Blaustein, Germany, also is at Project PLASE in Baltimore. **Paul Zelder** of Braunschweig, Germany, will work with Abode Services in Fremont, Calif. **Elena Hodapp** of Sasbach, Germany, will serve at the Family Abuse Center in Waco.



Hurricane Sandy response Shipments of relief materials that headed out from warehouses at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., responding to Hurricane Sandy exceeded \$900,000 in value.

A dramatic incarnation

Like the French Revolution—and set within its ongoing aftershocks—the film, *Les Misérables*, has spawned a passionate debate about what is good or bad, right or wrong with this interpretation of this classic tale. The 2012 film is largely based on the musical stage production of Victor Hugo’s sprawling novel. *Les Misérables* is driven by two central yet opposite characters: a criminal, Jean Valjean, and an officer of the law, Javert. Jean Valjean (Hugh Jackman), Prisoner 24601, is a convict who is



MIKE MCKEEVER

paroled after nearly 20 years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread for the starving children of his sister. After breaking parole, his life as an angry, marked man is forever transformed by the compassion of a priest he has robbed of silver. When the authorities apprehend Jean Valjean, the priest claims the silver was a gift and proceeds to add two large silver candlesticks overlooked in the theft. The priest later reminds Valjean that with this gift his soul has been purchased for God.

This act of grace transforms Jean Valjean into a patient and forgiving person. Because he has experienced salvation, he is one who, in various ways, saves others in the story. Unlike other characters in the drama who are committed to abstract ideals of law and order or revolution, Valjean works out his commitments, and his salvation, in concrete situations of human suffering and misery. He promises a dying mother, Fantine (Anne Hathaway), to raise her orphaned daughter as his own. Though hounded by Javert, Valjean continues to extend him grace and refuses to hold a grudge against the man who has been persecuting him for many years.

Jean Valjean is one who has received grace unexpectedly in life, and he experiences life after his transformation through the lens of grace. He has no family of his own but has a godly love for Fantine. He has no daughter but loves Fantine’s daughter, Cosette, as his own. He has no son but comes to love Marius, Cosette’s young revolutionary fiancé, as the son the Lord might have granted him, and heroically saves him from a certain death.

Javert (Russell Crowe), who was a guard during Valjean’s

prison sentence, eventually discovers the transformed Valjean, but still vows to bring him to justice. Javert embodies the rigor and regularity of the law, as well as its incapability to bring about transformation. Jean Valjean is constantly depicted as looking up, whether to the condemning presence of the law or to God in prayer. Alternatively, Javert is always looking down from above, striding along precarious precipices where he stands guard and paces his fixed course.

Javert lives in a world of absolutes, of black and white. To vary from the razor-thin line he draws between the two is a matter of life and death, indeed, of damnation. There is no place for forgiveness within his closed system. When he personally confronts the forgiveness extended by Jean Valjean, it is his ultimate undoing and, quite literally, his downfall.

Admittedly, this is an ambitious, in-your-face telling of the story. The film graphically depicts the misery and wretched existence that was early 19th century Paris for many. New technology has allowed the actors to sing live in front of the cameras as opposed to the previous necessity of lip-synching to numbers recorded beforehand. This creates a sense of stark earnestness that, while unusual when compared to other musicals, seems quite appropriate to the agony and emotion of the storyline.

Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* is one of the most powerful, effective, and affective embodiments of the gospel in western literature. And, like the musical stage production before it, this cinematic rendition proves to be a formidable and dramatic incarnation of the gospel as well. Though he lives in revolutionary times when angry men have taken up arms to instigate or suppress revolutions, Jean Valjean works out his personal transformation not through commitment to abstract causes, but through concrete and lifelong commitments to the wretched, “the miserable,” he encounters. Though the immediacy of violence and revolution serves as the backdrop for much of the story, the uplifting finale shifts to the “long view” of history—what Christians refer to as the eschatological perspective on the reconciliation of all things.

Will this rendition of Victor Hugo’s classic prove as beloved as previous incarnations? Too early to say. **ZU**

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



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Les Misérables*. **Theatrical release:** Dec. 25, 2012. **Running time:** 157 minutes. **Director:** Tom Hooper. **Writers:** William Nicholson, Alain Boublil, Claude-Michel Schönberg, Herbert Kretzmer. Based on the novel by Victor Hugo. **MPAA rating:** PG-13. **Production companies:** Working Title Films; Cameron Mackintosh Ltd.

TAKE NOTE

National Youth Sunday "In God's Image" is the theme for the next National Youth Sunday, on May 5. For more about youth Sunday and worship resources from the National Youth Cabinet go to www.brethren.org/yya/national-youth-sunday.html.

in God's image...
National Youth Sunday
May 5, 2013

National Youth Cabinet is announced for 2013-2014

The Church of the Brethren's National Youth Cabinet for 2013-14 has been announced by the Youth and Young Adult Ministry office. Youth members of the new cabinet are **Emmett Eldred** from Middle Pennsylvania District, **Brittany Fourman** from Southern Ohio District, **Sarandon Smith** from Atlantic Northeast District, **Sarah Ullom-Minnich** from Western Plains District, **Kerrick van Asselt** from Western Plains District, and **Zander Willoughby** from Michigan District. Adult advisors to the cabinet are **Rhonda Pittman Gingrich** of Northern Plains District, and **Dennis Lohr** of Atlantic Northeast District. Becky Ullom Naugle, director of the denomination's Youth and Young Adult Ministry, will work with the cabinet to plan National Youth Conference 2014.

Coordinators are named for National Youth Conference 2014

Three coordinators have been named for National Youth Conference 2014, to be held July 19-24, 2014, on the campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo.: Katie Cummings, Tim Heishman, and Sarah Neher.

Katie Cummings hails from Summit Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater, Va. She graduated from Bridgewater College in 2012 with a major in sociology and a minor in peace studies. She currently is serving in Brethren Volunteer Service as an assistant coordinator for the Church of the Brethren workcamp ministry.

Tim Heishman calls the North Baltimore Mennonite Church "home" this year as he serves as a youth leader through Mennonite Voluntary Service and also teaches seventh graders at Acts4Youth, an after-school program in the city. Over the years, he has called many places home including the Dominican Republic, where his parents served as Church of the Brethren mission workers. He graduated from Eastern Mennonite University in 2012 with majors in biblical studies and history.

Sarah Neher, a senior at McPherson (Kan.) College, calls McPherson Church of the Brethren her home church. She will complete student teaching this spring, and graduate in May with a degree in biology education.

The three coordinators will meet Feb. 15-17 with the National Youth Cabinet to begin planning the next National Youth Conference.

—Becky Ullom Naugle is director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.



Katie Cummings



Tim Heishman



Sarah Neher



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{ Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }

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



{ Resident Shantilal Bhagat }

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{ Chaplain Tom Hostetler }

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What divides Brethren

In the November 2012 edition of *MESSENGER*, Guy E. Wampler looks at "What holds Brethren together." I think it would be good for us to examine what continues to divide us Brethren. One thing I noticed at Annual Conference in St. Louis last summer was the deep division that exists among the Brethren. My interactions with various Brethren, and many of the discussions that were raised over the business items, made it apparent that in our denomination there are two different gods that we worship, two different Jesuses that we follow, and two different gospels that we preach. All of this stems from not having a unified view of the Bible. My friends, we cannot avoid addressing this issue much longer. As Jesus said, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and any city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). If we want to

move forward to glorify God, we must, as a body, get back to holding to the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

P. V. Lee Smith
Mt. Pleasant, Pa.

What the tribe has meant to me

Guy Wampler's article, "What holds Brethren together" (November *MESSENGER*) was superb. As I shared with the Bridgewater congregation on the occasion of my inauguration as Bridgewater College's president in 2010 (since resigned), I owe much to the Church of the Brethren, for it was the Brethren who introduced me to Jesus. Not just any Jesus, mind you. In fact, it was a Jesus not typically encountered in religious circles. It was the Jesus who wasn't wrapped in any nation's flag and who didn't wield a sword. He was the Prince of Peace, the one who redefined

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power and purpose. He was an incredibly alluring and transformative force. He was someone worth following, despite the costs.

Over these past several decades, as the denomination has been obsessed with and torn apart by issues of sexuality, "worthiness," and identity, and as our witness of nonviolence has been relegated to the sidelines (at best), I can't help wonder whether the denomination's time has passed. Indeed, membership and demographic data reveal a fading picture. In the grand

scheme of things, it matters not. The Jesus the Brethren told me about, as a kid growing

up in rural, south-central Pennsylvania in the turbulent and violent '60s, is not fading in the least. He still calls disciples. There are introductions to be made, people to love, and justice to pursue.

George Cornelius
Boulder, Colo.

Brethren at their best

We were saddened to learn of the death of Mary Blocher Smeltzer. Hearing of her death brought back memories of a wonderful visit with her at her Hillcrest home in La Verne, Calif., in April 2010. Brent Carlson, host of the *Brethren Voices* community television program (produced by Portland [Ore.] Peace Church of

the Brethren) and I had the wonderful opportunity to interview Mary. At 95 years of age, she truly was that spirited lady that we had been told about.

Because of the efforts of Mary and her husband, Ralph, many Japanese Americans were able to be released from the internment camp where they taught school to be settled in Church of the Brethren-sponsored programs in Chicago and New York to live independently during the war years. Mary represented the best of what Brethren can do in times of turmoil and conflict.

Just thinking about her brings joy to the heart. She did so much to share the ways of Jesus with others, not only in her serving Japanese Americans during World War II, but in assisting the women of the Church of



The Jesus the Brethren told me about, as a kid growing up in rural, south-central Pennsylvania in the turbulent and violent '60s, is not fading in the least.

Where will Nursing take you? Can the Church of the Brethren help?



Rachel Alderman
Mount Hermon Church of the Brethren
My dream is to be a nurse at St. Jude's Children's hospital, giving of my love and care to those precious children - helping them through that journey! This scholarship will help me tremendously!



Kirsten Eller
Ephrata Church of the Brethren
During a trip to Cambodia I saw firsthand the conditions of a third world hospital. I prayed to God never to let me forget what I was seeing, or the passion I was feeling to come and help these amazing people. This scholarship will help me accomplish the dreams God has planted in my heart.



Kirstie Studebaker
New Carlisle Church of the Brethren
I hope to use my experience for missions and disaster services. I want to be the nurse that delivers excellent care to every single patient. I am so honored to have been chosen to represent the church in such a wonderful way!



Marcia McCartney
Plymouth Church of the Brethren
After serving in geriatrics, I am furthering my goal of working in missions and community health. My studies require travel to Chiquimula, Guatemala, to learn more about Hispanic cultures and health beliefs - which will be a great benefit in serving my community. This scholarship will significantly assist in this endeavor.

This Nursing Scholarship program is available to members of the Church of the Brethren enrolled in an LPN, RN, or nursing graduate program. *Application deadline is April 1.* Application materials are available at www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships. For further information, email trowan@brethren.org or call (800) 323-8039, ext. 303.



Church of the Brethren

the Brethren to become a voice in the church.

In April 2010, she still demonstrated that wonderful spirit. I think we were able to capture her spirit in our *Brethren Voices* program of July 2010, titled, "Mary Blocher Smeltzer—Woman of Peace." That program can be viewed on www.Youtube.com/Brethrenvoices.

Ed Groff and Brent Carlson
Portland, Ore.

Had to use a yellow highlighter

I just finished reading Guy Wampler's piece in the November MESSENGER and was overwhelmed with its wisdom. It is beautifully written, concise, all-encompassing, and helpful to us who were raised in the Brethren tradition and sometimes have to explain ourselves to people who were not so raised. I had to use a yellow highlighter for much of

Pontius' Puddle

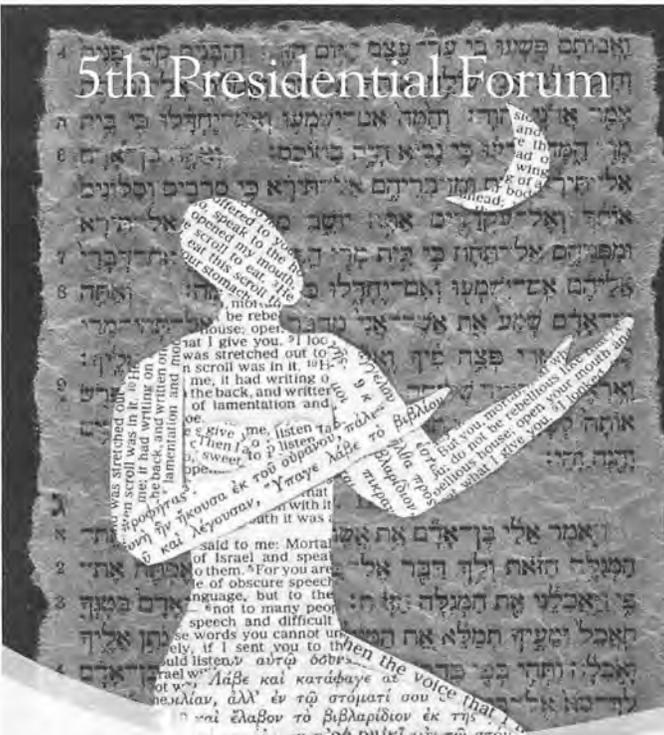


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Dr. David L. Barr
Scholar and author; Chair of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics at Wright State University

Jan Richardson
Artist, writer, and United Methodist minister

Dr. Thomas E. Boomershine
Internationally known speaker and author on interpreting biblical narratives; former G. Ernest Thomas Distinguished Professor of Christianity and Communication, United Theological Seminary

Garrison Doles
Singer and songwriter



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—Amanda Helfrich
Outdoor ministry and adventure leadership major
Oakland Church of the Brethren
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it, and would consider memorizing some passages. Let us count Guy Wampler among our church leaders *now*, and not wait 50 years!

Harriet Beahm Kaylor
Huntingdon, Pa.

Thanks for the nudge

I am an ordained Church of the Brethren minister serving as a licensed clinical addictions counselor. When I read your November editorial, I immediately knew this was a story I needed to share. And so, in the Intensive Outpatient/Modified Outpatient groups I lead directly preceding Christmas, I closed each session by reading your piece aloud. My clients were quite attentive. And it is my hope that by sharing this story, perhaps my clients were just a bit more patient, caring, or present with others during their various Christmas dinners. I realize that for many of them, this might be their first sober holiday. Certainly all of us can learn from Jesus' model of caring and listening. But sometimes it's important to receive a nudge. Thanks for this poignant reminder.

Yvonne Riege
Northern Indiana District

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- PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8/2013)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (July 23-August 3/2013)
- CHINA & YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (Nov 1-15/2013)

ECO-ADVENTURE TOURS

- AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND (Feb 1-21/2013) **SOLD OUT!**
- ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19/2013)
- EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (Dec 9-15/2013)
- AMAZON RAINFOREST & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (Jan 16-26/2014)
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-26/2014)

EDUCATIONAL TOURS

- CHURCHES & SAFARIS IN KENYA & TANZANIA (Feb 8-20/2013) **SOLD OUT!**
- BRITISH ISLES (ENGLAND, SCOTLAND & WALES) WITH DAVID & JOYCE ESHLEMAN (Sept 13-25/2013)
- JAMAICA: ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY & FRUITS (Jan 18-27/2014)

CUSTOM TOURS

- MEDA IN MOROCCO (April 2-12/2013)
- HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR TO EUROPE (May 24-June 6/2013)
- COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15/2013)

HOLY LAND TOURS

- HOLY LAND TOUR WITH TRACY SPROAT (Mar 13-21/2013)

- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25/2013)
- LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN & CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7/2013)
- EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL WITH TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17/2013)
- FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MOSES WITH PASTOR NELSON KRABILL (July 22-31/2013)
- BEHIND THE VEIL: EXPERIENCING EGYPT (Oct 17-28/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR RICH BUCHER (Nov 5-14/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR DAVID BOSHART (April 24-May 3/2014)
- FROM NAZARETH TO ROME WITH PASTOR JIM BROWN (Nov 3-15/2014)

HERITAGE TOURS

- EUROPEAN HERITAGE WITH PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15/2013)
- GREAT TREK TOUR WITH JOHN SHARP (May 7-18/2013)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE WITH JOHN RUTH (June 6-19/2013)
- RUSSIA & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY (Sept 4-16/2013)
- EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 15-27/2014)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE WITH JOHN RUTH (June 24-July 7/2014)

MYSTERY TOUR

- MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26, 2013)



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The new Sunday school curriculum produced by Brethren Press and MennoMedia is accepting applications to write for Preschool, Primary, Middler, Multiage, and Junior Youth age groups for 2014-15. The new curriculum will seek to follow the Gather 'Round curriculum in providing quality Anabaptist/Pietist materials. Writers produce well-written, age-appropriate, and engaging material for teacher's guides, student books, and additional resources. All writers will attend an orientation April 22-25, in Milford, IN. See Job Opportunities at www.gatherround.org. Application deadline is Feb. 9, 2012.

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039, ext. 320; jclements@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Beaver, Iowa: Tessa Lorenzen, Jackie Grisham
Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.: Johnnie Holmes, Jr., Tedi Nelson, Paula Rhoderick, Lorena Stocks
Cedar Lake, Auburn, Ind.: Riann Parsons, Matt Davis, Michael Gordon
Cerro Gordo, Ill.: Tim Laird, Betty Sue Laird
Crest Manor, South Bend, Ind.: Michael Pancoast, Nancy Thompson, Reynaldo Hernandez, Glenda Rae Hernandez
Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio: Donna Crooks, Josh Tesmer, Brian Tesmer
Freeport, Ill.: Rodney Voss
Hanover, Pa.: Norma Becker, Tim Rutkowski, Melissa Rutkowski, Joseph Hasener
Harman, W.Va.: Jessie Dolly, Janet Cooper, Brenda Wolford, Savanna Rhodes
Harmony, Myersville, Md.: Chris Johnkin
Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Kiah Bucher, Andrew Martin
Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.: Craig Smith, Victoria Smith
Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: Joan Feiss, Roy Feiss
Lansing, Mich.: Lucille Edelen, Kevin Driedger
Linville Creek, Broadway, Va.: Joan Strawderman, Steve Strawderman, Lisa Funkhouser, Matthew Funkhouser, Joseph

Funkhouser, Micah Leininger, James Ritchie, Zoe White
Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind.: Charles Vanderveer, Shirley Vanderveer, Faye Ganger, Josh Keck, Andrea Keck, Brian Riggle, Madison Riley, Holly Herschberger, Abigail Stuckman, Sydney Stuckman
Mount Vernon, Waynesboro, Va.: Martha Palmer
New Enterprise, Pa.: Justin Gochnour
New Fairview, York, Pa.: Shelby Bohnert, Harry Carnahan, Eric Hamberger, Lydia Hamberger, Riley Hamberger, Amber Hartman, Breanna Hartman, Lindsay Ilyes, Stephen Ilyes, Emily Livingston
North Liberty, Ind.: John Shoue, Janet Shoue, Christopher Shoue, William Shoue, Sarah Shoue
Roxbury, Johnstown, Pa.: Donna Kelley, Wanda Maldet, Pam Sajatovich
Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.: Andrew Van Horn, Jennette Van Horn, Paula Davis, Gregory Clapper, Lance Weaverling
Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.: Kathryn Beck, Brandon Beck, Melissa McBrayer, Bert McBrayer, Beth Williams, Lauren Seganos, Haley Goodwin, Kati Csoman
Troy, Ohio: Darlene Clawson, Ruth Romie, Shelby Spiers, Peggy Wehrley
Wabash, Ind.: Megan Bishir
Warrensburg, Mo.: Ashley Virginia Staab, Teresa Pearce, Melody Irl
Yellow Creek, Goshen, Ind.: Paul Pressler, Grace Pressler, Esther Pressler, Hannah Brubaker

Wedding Anniversaries

Anglemyer, Herman and Carol, Nappanee, Ind., 55
Berg, Clarence and Margaret, Hanover, Pa., 65
Drawert, Carl and Dolores, South Bend, Ind., 55
Heisey, Paul and Dorothy, Denver, Pa., 65
Herline, Donald and Patsy, Everett, Pa., 55
Huber, Dale and Doris, Elkhart, Ind., 50
Myers, Paul and Ella, Fostoria, Ohio, 55
Pritt, Ed and Edie, Bridgewater, Va., 50
Showalter, Arlen and Edna, Everett, Pa., 60
Swartz, Ray and Fay, Hanover, Pa., 55

Deaths

Almoslino, Easy, 93, Seattle, Wash., Aug. 12
Baker, Thelma, 91, Ridgely, Md., Oct. 29
Beachley, Elsie M., 94, Berlin, Pa., Nov. 4
Bruckhart, Mary, 97, Palmyra, Pa., Nov. 15
Calhoun, Glenn J., 60, Everett, Pa., July 14
Calhoun, Rebecca M., 92, Charlesville, Pa., Oct. 15
Childs, Margaret Mae, 87, Winchester, Va., June 10
Chronister, Earl J., Jr., 84, York, Pa., July 8
Clark, Ruth D., 77, Froid, Mont., Nov. 6
Coble, Harry M., 74, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 29
College, Margaret E., 80, Everett, Pa., June 7
Crawford, Geneva Maxine, 97, Flat Rock, Ill., Oct. 5
Crider, Wanda M., 80, Lima, Ohio, Nov. 23
Crummett, Elvira Jane, 99, Franklin, W.Va., Sept. 1
DeLancy, Dale L., 78, Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 29
Derr, Dorothy M., 84, Myerstown, Pa., Nov. 20

Donaldson, Betty Mae, 71, Oakwood, Ohio, Nov. 8
English, Carolyn, 87, Huntingdon, Pa., Oct. 7
Flora, Kermit Peters, 99, Boones Mill, Va., Nov. 10
Frantz, Marie Flory, 101, Leo, Ind., Nov. 4
Groff, Harry, 75, Harman, W.Va., Aug. 28
Hackman, Ronald G., 66, Harleysville, Pa., March 1, 2012
Hammer, Charles Roy, 87, Franklin, W.Va., June 25
Hammer, Charlotte, Corrina, 76, Franklin, W. Va., March 23, 2012
Herline, Patsy, 85, Everett, Pa., March 29, 2012
Hoover, Mary E., 87, Gettysburg, Pa., Oct. 28
Hults, Ed, 84, Huntingdon, Pa., Oct. 21
Judy, John D., Sr., 73, Franklin, W.Va., July 17
Keeney, Samuel E., 71, Jacobus, Pa., Nov. 10
Kidwell, Delia Cordero, 84, Sebring, Fla., Sept. 29
Lance, Eugene Alton, 84, Ashland, Ohio, June 18
Larkin, Guy R., 89, York, Pa., July 31
League, Amelia Dale, 87, Cumberland, Md., Oct. 21
Lehman, Mary E. Chronister, 96, York, Pa., Oct. 23
MacFarland, David M., Sr., 85, Ridgely, Md., Oct. 3
McAuley, Roy Edwin, 91, Warrensburg, Mo., Oct. 29
McCoy, Mary Ann, 71, Leeton, Mo., Sept. 10
McDowell, Lelia V., 94, Johnson City, Tenn., Oct. 27
McKenzie, Robert, 85, Huntingdon, Pa., April 14
Mead, Claude Ryland, 69, Lorida, Fla., Sept. 29
Mitts, Linda Merle, 68, Staunton, Va., Oct. 20
Peters, Donald E., Sr., 85, Bedford, Pa., Oct. 31
Pittman, Allen R., 70,

Everett, Pa., Jan. 28, 2012
Rhodes, Leon A., 80, McVeytown, Pa., Oct. 31
Rhodes, Rachel K., 85, McVeytown, Pa., Sept. 21
Rotenberger, Kathryn R., 97, Quakertown, Pa., March 1, 2012
Rusmisl, David C., 93, Lima, Ohio, Nov. 12
Sampson, James R., 63, Mount Blanchard, Ohio, Nov. 7
Shaffer, Dorothy Foreman, 87, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 15
Shanks, Jackie, 72, Perrysville, Ohio, May 25
Shelton, Randall C., 53, Winston-Salem, N.C., Nov. 10
Simmons, Ethel W., 95, Everett, Pa., April 1
Simpson, Connie L., 65, West Alexandria, Ohio, May 16
Stovall, William Carl, 80, Roanoke, Va., Nov. 14
Sunderland, Hazel M., 88, Reedsville, Pa., Aug. 7
Tritapoe, Brian, 57, Knoxville, Md., Oct. 19
Wash, Alice Anna, 89, La Verne, Calif., July 24
Werner, Carrie Alice, 97, Hanover, Pa., Aug. 11
Whitehead, Evelyn Helen, 90, Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 15
Willow, Sara J., 61, Thompsonstown, Pa., Oct. 30
Yorke, Jonathan David, 30, Huntingdon, Pa., May 5
Zimmerman, Mary B., 71, Everett, Pa., May 15

Ordinations

Frazer, W. Jason, Mo. & Ark. Dist. (Bethany, Norborne, Mo.), Oct. 14
Henry, Rebecca, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Thurmont, Md.), Nov. 11
O'Neill, Lawrence, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Skippack, Colledgeville, Pa.), Nov. 4

On God and Huell Howser

Gomer Pyle came to mind when I first saw him. I'm sure I wasn't alone. With his boundless curiosity and almost childlike sense of wonder at everything and everyone he encountered, Huell Howser could have been a brother—or at least a first cousin—of TV's ever-sunny Marine.

It didn't take much to elicit a Southern-tinged "Wow! That's amazing!" from Huell Howser. It could be anything from a hot dog on a stick or a Mom & Pop donut shop, to windmills in the desert or even a bunny museum (yes, there actually is one, in Pasadena, Calif.). Nothing was too ordinary or too insignificant to him. Everything, it seemed, left him amazed and in awe.

With only a hand-held microphone, a single cameraman, and boundless inquisitiveness, Howser brought to light countless wonders throughout the state of California over the past three decades in his public television broadcasts. Originally from Tennessee, the former Marine—with his close-cropped hair and drill sergeant's build—could seem imposing at first glance. But his ever-present smile and warm, molasses drawl quickly disarmed everyone he approached. And he



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER EDITOR

that Howser's almost constant state of enthusiasm and gee-whiz attitude wasn't staged. Could he really be that interested and amazed by everything?

"Sometimes, people say, 'Are you putting that on?'" Howser said in a 2009 interview. "That's kind of a sad commentary, don't you think? Like there's got to be something wrong with someone who's enthusiastic and happy like that. Do I have bad days? Yes. Do I get depressed? Yes. Am I concerned about the state of the California economy and budget? I'm not some Pollyanna who doesn't recognize that there's hunger and poverty and racism in the world."

It didn't take long for most viewers to catch on that Howser's interest in his subjects wasn't fake. He really was like that favorite uncle. And, in that aspect, I suppose he reminded us, in a way, of what Jesus told us about the nature of God, who cares for us down to the last hair on our heads, who will leave 99 sheep in the meadow to seek out the one who's wandered off and bring it back to the fold.

Also, Howser's sense of wonder reminded us that, despite the world's woes—and there are plenty, from fiscal cliffs to semi-automatic weapons to runaway greed—God hopes we will notice the beauty around every turn, and in every person. Not just notice, but really see it. As Shug so eloquently put it, in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, "I think it [ticks] God off when you walk by the color purple in a field and don't notice it."

Howser reminded us that it's okay to have unbridled enthusiasm and awe for the wonders of the world no matter how small they may seem.

approached everyone, from leather-clad bikers to bookish professors, in a way that made them feel as though they were the most important people in the world.

When he died at his home in Palm Springs early this year, I felt the same way I did when Mr. Rogers left us. It was as if some of life's buoyancy and joy had ebbed; the world became a bit grayer, heavier, colder. There was a sense of innocence lost.

In the days since, I've realized that Howser's death represented something more than the passing of a beloved TV personality. It evoked something deeper. Howser was like the favorite uncle everyone wished they had, the one who made them feel special and important, the one who took a genuine interest in them.

Some weren't sure it was real. They found it hard to believe

We may, at times, find it hard to believe that God's boundless grace and acceptance of us is genuine. But we're grateful for reminders that it is, even when those reminders come in the form of folksy TV personalities like Huell Howser.

"He would walk up to people, just an ordinary person, and he seemed genuinely interested and surprised at anything they said, treating them like they were amazing," observed comedian Adam Carolla. "He was such a kind soul. The world could use a few more Huell Howsers."

Indeed it could. Howser reminded us that it's okay to have unbridled enthusiasm and awe for the wonders of the world, no matter how small they may seem. And that everyone, no matter how seemingly insignificant, has a story worth hearing. I imagine God is listening—maybe we should, too. **M**

COMING IN MARCH: What was left in China, and what lives on today, in the words of missionaries' children.

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