

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2013 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

**A kinder, gentler
gathering in Charlotte**

*Move
in our
Midst*

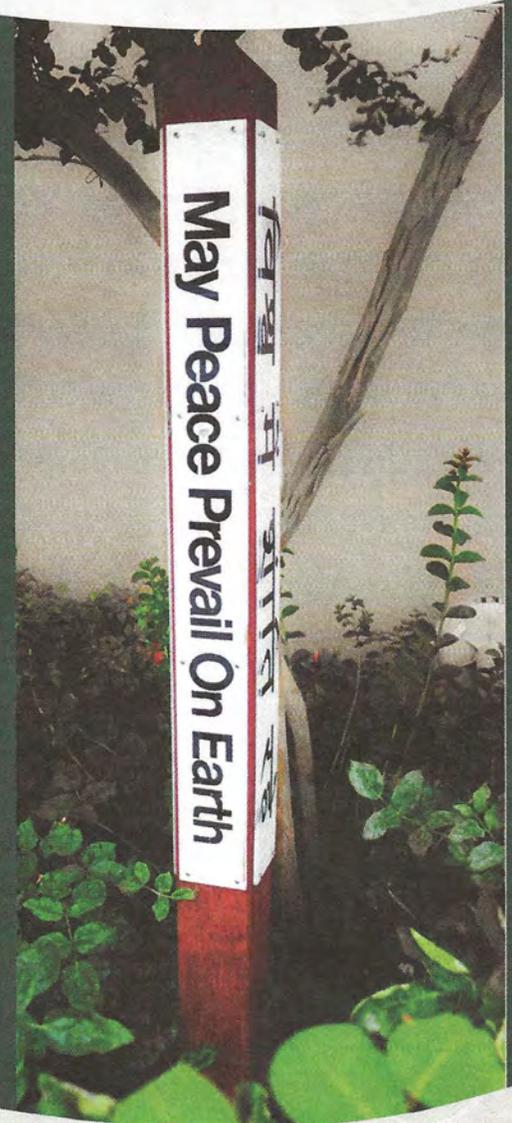
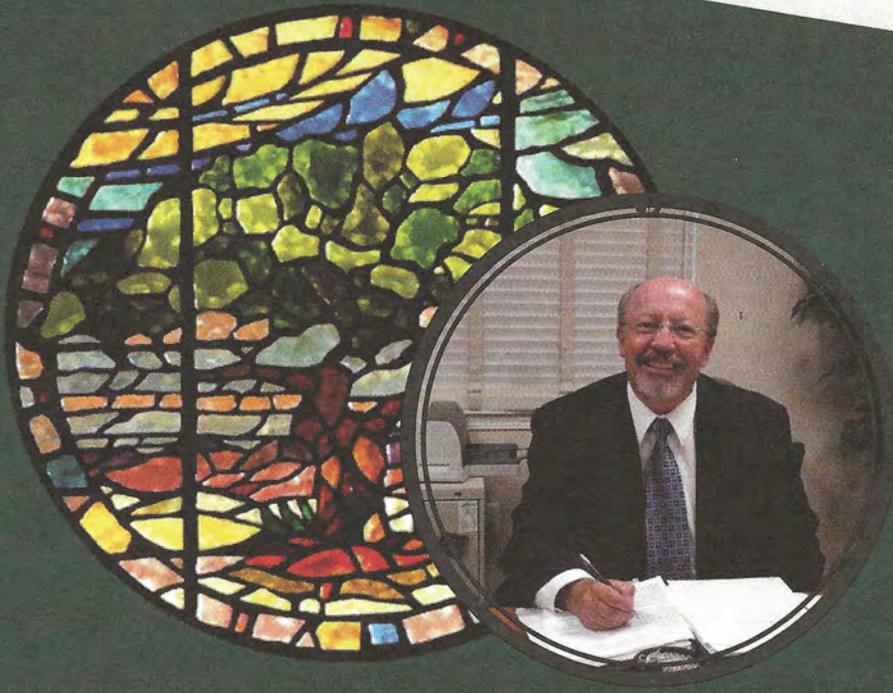
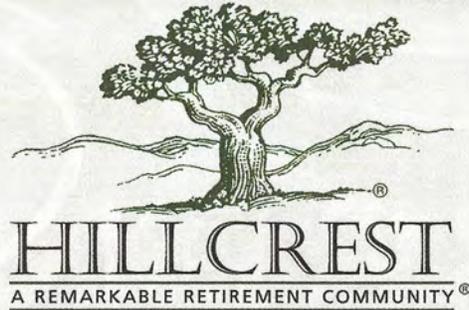
Welcome!


Church
of the
Brethren

*Move
in our
Midst*

Welcome!


Church
of the
Brethren



Hillcrest Chaplain Tom Hostetler - " Opportunities abound for worship at all levels of service. Sharing and inspiration to meet a variety of needs, and the beautiful community and surroundings all work together to make Hillcrest a remarkable place."

PEACEFULLY. SIMPLY. TOGETHER. HILLCREST.

2705 Mountain View Drive | La Verne, California | 909-392-4375
LivingatHillcrest.org
DSS #191501662 | COA #069



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



September 2013 VOL.162 NO. 7 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

8 A kinder, gentler gathering in Charlotte

Maybe it was something in the air, the water (or the grape juice) but, if this year's Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C., is any indication, Brethren may be once again getting the hang of engaging in dialogue and doing the business of the church in a way that's more constructive and, well, more Brethren than it has been in the recent past. Encouraging signs were in abundance—even in the banners that hung “high in this hour” throughout the arena.

13 Time for the gavel to go?

Two-time Annual Conference moderator Elaine Sollenberger asks if it's time to put the hammer down—in a manner of speaking. We are a peace church after all, she reasons, so instead of a gavel, maybe it's time we find another symbol of leadership for our moderator.

14 All together

Every five years, Brethren of all stripes, collars, beards, and prayer coverings gather not to conduct formal business, but to remember and celebrate our unique common heritage. It happened again this summer in Brookville—a location that was particularly appropriate as a gathering place.

18 Words that hurt

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” So goes the familiar saying meant to downplay the power of unkind words. Not so, at least according to James' epistle, says Chris Keating. “James is emphatic that our speech does matter. James understands the power of speech. Speech creates the foundation for a good life, and is the indication of God's presence in our lives.”

departments

2 FROM THE PUBLISHER	20 NEWS	28 LETTERS
3 IN TOUCH	24 MEDIA REVIEW	31 TURNING POINTS
6 REFLECTIONS	26 LIVING SIMPLY	32 EDITORIAL
7 THE BUZZ	27 YOUTH LIFE	

on the cover Banners welcome Brethren to Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C. Photo by Glenn Riegel

The simple exercise was years ago, but I remember it well. We each drew a circle. Inside we were to write words to describe ourselves. Outside the circle we wrote words that described what we were not.

Then we were instructed to take note of the words outside of the circle, because those words described a reality that we did not know from personal experience—and thus were likely to overlook. I, for example, do not truly know what it is like to be tall, athletic, male, rural, southern, elderly, white, black, or non-Christian.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

There's nothing wrong with that. I am who I am. But it would be silly for me to insist that the only valid world is one for short, bookish females. I could say that tall people were only imagining those low door-frames and bruised foreheads, but I would be wrong.

There is much to lament whenever the nation is gripped by another intractable debate about race. What remains after the bodies are buried is the painful realization that there are two sharply divided points of view, two apparent realities, two nations. When polls show almost completely opposite reactions from black and white citizens, then we can't really say the matter is not about race.

Should we take sides? Some say no.

I say yes. Yes, because we must sit with Rachel as she weeps for her children. Yes, because the biblical record shows repeated examples of God taking sides—usually in uncomfortable ways that turn the established order upside down. Yes, because we have declared our intention to be a multicultural church, and at some point that has to shift us beyond promises and into something more difficult. Yes, because we must look outside the circles that define us, and take seriously the “others” on the rest of the page.

Is it possible to take a side without devolving into the arguments of the world around us? We can remember the advice we gave ourselves six years ago: “Listen, listen, listen to each other and respect one another” (“Separate No More,” 2007 Annual Conference Statement). This would be a good time for white Brethren to respectfully ask questions of black Brethren, and then listen closely to the answers.

A large, elegant handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy McFadden".

How to reach us

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

messengersubscriptions@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 327
Fax: 847-742-1407

Advertising:

messengerads@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 308
Fax: 847-742-1407

Editorial:

messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 376
Fax: 847-742-1407

Subscription rates:

\$17.50 individual rate
- \$32 for 2 years
\$14.50 gift rate
\$14.50 church club rate
- \$27 for 2 years
\$ 1.25 student (per month)

If you move, clip address label and send with new address to MESSENGER Subscriptions, at the above address. Allow at least five weeks for address change.

Digital Messenger offers enhanced content. Go to www.brethren.org/accessmessenger.

Visit MESSENGER online at www.brethren.org/messenger.

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

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © September 2013, Church of the Brethren.

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

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



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

Volunteers assemble 1,700 Emergency Clean-Up Buckets in two hours

Why would anyone want to work on a hot summer day? On a Saturday? As a volunteer?

Well, 150 people from the Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania Districts of the Church of the Brethren did just that on June 29 at Florin Church of the Brethren in Mount Joy, Pa. Ranging in age from 3 years to more than 85, they came in response to a request from Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md., whose supply of Emergency Clean-Up Buckets had been depleted following the tornadoes in Texas and Kansas, and who had asked the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction to assemble more.



BDRA volunteers assemble 1,700 Emergency Clean-Up Buckets



The assembly area was set up the day before, so that when the volunteers arrived, there were seven assembly lines with 12 stations each, the supplies already stacked on the tables. An empty bucket started at one end, and as it traveled down the line, volunteers packed 58 items needed for clean-up after a disaster. The last person tightly packed the items in the bucket, hammered the lid on, secured it with tape and stacked it on a pallet.

A second crew then moved the pallets to a waiting 18-wheeler where a third crew loaded them for immediate shipment to the New Windsor warehouse. A fourth crew supplied the tables with fresh product and removed and packed the discarded boxes. When one line

depleted its product supply, it was shut down, the area cleaned, and the tables folded and stacked. By the time the last line was finished, the clean-up was already nearly complete. The crews assembled 1,700 Emergency Clean-Up Buckets in less than two hours. That's 14 buckets per minute, or one bucket every 4.2 seconds.

The wholesale value of the buckets is \$100,000, paid by the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction. The annual auction is held every September at the Lebanon Expo and Fairgrounds, and last year raised more than \$500,000 for disaster relief, which includes not only activities such as assembling the Clean-Up Buckets, but also disaster relief trips for volunteers from the organization. **-Dave Farmer**

Congregation Close-Up

by the numbers

43,183

Number of school supply items given by Annual Conference attendees to Classroom Central in Charlotte, N.C., for students at or below poverty level in the area

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.

Branching out in Frederick

Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren featured a four-part sermon series in the spring entitled “Branching Out” which focused on various ways to serve God at the church. It challenged those who heard the sermons to step forward and find ways to become involved. Sundays following each service, volunteers in colorful shirts stood outside the sanctuary to greet worshippers, explain their particular ministry, and provide information on how to become involved.



During the series, pastors presented sermons that centered on faith and fulfillment through service for Christ. The sermons also included videos featuring testimonies from various Frederick Church of the Brethren members. Even though these members came from different walks of life, they provided a similar message: that God blesses those who serve him.

Most of those interviewed for the videos admitted that they were hesitant to take the first step toward becoming more involved in the church. However, they found that the more they became involved, the more God brought out their talents. They also found that God provided them with relationships that have stood the test of time.

The “Branching Out” series was designed to encourage those who were uncertain about taking the step forward. It provided an easy way to become informed about service, and offered “First Serve” opportunities to those who wanted to begin serving God right away. These opportunities allowed members to become involved on a small level and experience the power of serving God.

The theme, “Bearing Fruit,” was evident in the sermons and was illustrated by a grapevine display around the entrance to the sanctuary. It was also present in the hearts and minds of those in attendance. The goal of the series was to branch out and bear fruit for Christ.

Even though the Branching Out series is over, people still can access the sermons and video testimonies through FCOB’s website (www.fcob.net; click on the More Media link). They also still can respond to First Serve opportunities by clicking on the Get Involved—Serve page. —Joe Ryan



Knitting strong in Martinsburg

It began in 2002 with only eight members. Since then, the Prayer Shawl group that began at Memorial Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, Pa., has added additional members (they’re up to about 15 now), and relocated to the Morrison’s Cove Home, where they have produced more than 245 prayer shawls. The fruits of their labors are given to church members, people in the community, or anyone who may need a comforting wrap. With every shawl they knit, the women lift up each recipient in prayer.

Pictured here are, left to right: Minnie Dean, Dottie Ritchey, Linda Felton, Kathleen Mitchell, Betty Feath, Eileen Sell, Jean Harshbarger, Pauline Huntsman, Brenda Johnson, and Dawn Baker.





Dedication of hitching rail at the John Kline Homestead

On Sunday, June 9, the John Kline Memorial Riders hosted a picnic at the John Kline Homestead in Broadway, Va., in celebration of Emmert and Esther Bittinger's 17 years of leadership of the annual John Kline Memorial Rides. Guests were board members of the John Kline Homestead, friends, and family of Emmert and Esther.

A hitching rail of local locust logs was crafted into an authentic hitching rail by Joe Wampler and Greg Geisert of the John Kline Riders. A bronze plaque was installed on the hitching rail with the following inscription:

"In honor of Emmert and Esther Bittinger for their dedication and leadership commemorating John Kline's legacy through the John Kline Memorial rides beginning 1997."

Last of the original members

Erma Ecker Frock, 93, of Westminster, Md., has attended Westminster Church of the Brethren for 85 years. She has been active in the church all her life, and rarely misses Sunday worship service. She has served as a deacon for many years, taught Sunday school for 35 years, taught Bible school many summers, and led Junior Church.

Her family has attended the Westminster Church for five generations. She is the last of the original charter members of the congregation.

She was widowed at age 52, and finished raising her children, making sure they went to college. She has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



James Showalter

LANDMARKS and laurels

➔ **Two Church of the Brethren-related schools** have been named among this year's "Great Colleges to Work For": **Manchester University** in N. Manchester, Ind., and **Juniata College** in Huntingdon, Pa. The listing is produced by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which polled 45,000 employees at 300 institutions for its annual report. According to a release, Manchester is "the only small Indiana college in a five-state area to make the list. . . . Manchester University not only is one of the best college workplaces in the nation, it is a role model for fair and clear faculty tenure policies." This is the fourth year in a row that Manchester achieved Honor Roll status among the 97 colleges receiving recognition.

➔ **Juniata College** also was placed on the Honor Roll, the fourth time Juniata has been singled out as an Honor Roll recipient since the poll began in 2008. Juniata was recognized as a leader in the Small College division (499 employees or fewer) in six out of 12 categories.

➔ **The Open Roof Award** is presented each year to congregations who have made specific efforts to "ensure that all may worship, serve, be served, learn, and grow in the presence of God, as valued members of the Christian community."

During the Mission and Ministry Board meeting prior to the 2013 Annual Conference, four congregations were honored for their work: Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Nettle Creek Church of the Brethren in Hagerstown, Ind.; Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa.; and Wolgamuth Church of the Brethren in Dillsburg, Pa.

Further adventures at the Paradise Diner

On the drive home from Annual Conference this summer, I decided on a whim to leave the interstate and head down old Route 11 for a more relaxed trip through the mountains. Suddenly, there it was: the Paradise Diner. For old time's sake, I decided to stop and see if Sophia still worked there, and if perchance Michael Angelos might be around.

The diner was busy, and there was only one open seat across the table from a straight-coat brother still wearing his Annual Conference name tag. It read: "B. R. Efferson." He gave me a warm smile when he spotted my own name tag still pinned to my sport coat, and gestured for me to sit down.



BY THOMAS DOTTERER
(aka: Earle Fike, Jr.)

"I've already started, but you're welcome to join me," he said. I thanked him and slid into the booth. Sophia was already at my elbow. "You doing the special again?" she asked. I nodded.

"Did you lose your way, too?"

Efferson asked, grinning.

"You mean while I was at Conference, or on the way home?"

He chuckled. "Well, this isn't the most direct way back to Virginia or

Pennsylvania, which I assume is where you're headed. But I must say, for myself, I'm going home from Conference in better shape than last year."

"Same for me," I said. "I have more hope for fraternal

I decided to be brave. "You mean like Dan West and M. R. Zigler did in the '40s and '50s when they encouraged the church to give a cup of cold water, and expanded that to sending cows and other farm animals to those who had been our enemies in the war?"

Efferson nodded, and then surprised me as he added, "And also like government-offered alternative service in things such as road building and forest preservation work."

I thought we were on a roll. "In somewhat the same spirit of the dialogue between brother Paul and sister Pam, would you agree that the work we do together in such things as providing emergency aid to children and adults involved in catastrophes, and working with the underprivileged and poor in fostering health care is perhaps more important to Jesus than agreement on every jot and tittle of New Testament law?"

He gave me a wry grin. "Is that a test question?"

"Not really," I said. "But it does seem that we're both affirming that we do better by offering acts of compassion and love for others than we do in throwing confrontational brickbats as a way to put down brothers and sisters who do not agree with our individual biblical positions."

Efferson had finished eating, and stood to leave. His smile was sincere. "I had heard a rumor about a place called the Paradise Diner and, while some thought it was an unsavory place for sincere Christian pilgrims, I must say, Thomas, I've found it a delightful education to share a table with you here. I hope we meet again, perhaps at next year's Conference—maybe bidding against each other at the annual quilt auction.

I stood and put out my hand. He took it, and in that moment we shared a brotherly acceptance that felt good.

relations within our church than I did last year. The dialogue sermon between brother Paul Brubaker and sister Pam Reist modeled a form of conversation and understanding that could benefit our denomination."

"I agree," he said. "Not that I don't believe in the necessity of study and dialogue to rightly interpret the Word. But I truly believe Jesus would rather we spent time caring for our neighbor than arguing the fine points of New Testament interpretation. He didn't tell his disciples to more closely study the ancient scriptures. He told them to love God and neighbor, to care for the lost, the forgotten, the disenfranchised."

We are kinfolks in belief and faith, after all."

I stood and put out my hand. He took it, and in that moment we shared a brotherly acceptance that felt good. Then he turned and walked out to his car.

As I watched him drive away, Sophia touched my elbow with the check. She smiled. "He paid for yours," she said, "but he thought it was only fitting that you also pay for his."

Isn't brotherhood a good thing! **UU**

Earle Fike, Jr., is a retired pastor and national executive in the Church of the Brethren. Read about Thomas Dotterer's previous adventures at the Paradise Diner in the March 2013 MESSENGER.

“I hope that the Church of the Brethren is a safe place for sinners.”
 —Author Philip Yancey, speaking this summer at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C.

cultureview

“I think the church has a huge opportunity to be a conduit of reconciliation, but you can’t reconcile the country until you reconcile your own pews.”

—Bishop T. D. Jakes, Dallas megachurch pastor, on what role the church plays in discussions about race

“Jesus seemed to value relationships over regulations and rituals, whether that relationship was with someone of a different tradition, someone society hated, or someone religious leaders considered immoral.”

—Greg Damhorst, MD/PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a leader with Interfaith in Action, the university’s premier student interfaith organization

“I don’t want to be accepted, I want my life transformed.”

—Theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas speaking this summer at the Brethren Press and MESSENGER dinner at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C.

▶ **“Through our partnership with the Church of the Brethren, the vital ministries we support around the world embody the love of Jesus Christ, who moves in our midst,”** said John L McCullough, president and CEO of Church World Service, making a reference to this summer’s Church of the Brethren Annual Conference theme. McCullough, who spoke at the Global Ministries Dinner at the Conference, added, “When I think of that theme I think: recognition, invitation, and declaration. It reminds us we serve a living, breathing, action-oriented God.”

▶ **Smoking in the US is highly correlated with religiosity, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, with those who never attend church almost three times as likely to smoke as those who attend weekly. This relationship holds even when controlling for demographic characteristics**

associated with smoking and church attendance.

▶ **There is reason to believe that crimes against humanity have been committed in Nigeria,** according to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, namely murder and persecution by the militant group known as Boko Haram. A report issued by the Office of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, found that the group has, since July 2009, “launched a widespread and systematic attack that has resulted in the killing of more than 1,200 Christian and Muslim civilians in different locations throughout Nigeria.

▶ **As the result of a new relationship between BibleGateway and the National Council of Churches,** visitors to BibleGateway.com have access to the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible translations.

Heard 'round the world



“I want to live in a world where George Zimmerman offered Trayvon Martin a ride home to get him out of the rain that night.”

—Episcopal Bishop Greg Brewer of central Florida, in a tweet after George Zimmerman was acquitted on charges of murdering Trayvon Martin

“(Christ) is a true revolutionary and we are revolutionaries of this revolution, because we walk on the path of the greatest transformation in the history of mankind. A Christian, if he is not a revolutionary, in this time, he is not a Christian!” —Pope Francis, speaking at the opening of the Diocese of Rome congress.

A kinder, gentler gathering in Charlotte

Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



More than one Conference-goer noted that this year's Annual Conference, held June 29 to July 3 in Charlotte, N.C., felt markedly different from those held in recent years. Some claimed that it was a kinder, gentler gathering, perhaps owing to the fact that delegates once again conducted business at round tables, or maybe because the first full day of Conference on Sunday was devoted to spiritual renewal, with no business sessions. Or it could have been due to there being fewer hot-button items on the agenda. Perhaps it was a combination of all of these factors.

Whatever the reasons, the Conference theme calling upon the Spirit of God to "Move in Our Midst" felt especially timely. Moderator Bob Krouse's choice of the theme, taken from the beloved "Brethren anthem" penned by former MESSENGER editor Kenneth I. Morse, with music by Perry Huffaker, seemed an apt description of what many experienced as they addressed business items, attended insight sessions, and enjoyed the many banquets and gatherings, formal and otherwise, during the week.

Conference activities began on Saturday, with the Standing Committee of district delegates ending four days of pre-Conference meetings, the Mission and Ministry Board holding its summer meeting, and the conclusion of a Ministers' Association continuing education event. The Council of District Executives (CODE) also finished their pre-Conference meetings, and morning and afternoon deacon training workshops were offered by the denominational Deacon Ministry. And the Open Table Cooperative held its first Conference event: a free reception open to anyone who was interested.

The evening worship service officially opened the Conference, with moderator Bob Krouse, who pastors Little

[Contributing to this report were Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren, with help from the Annual Conference News Team: photographers Glenn Riegel, Regina Holmes, Debbie Surin, Alysson Wittmeyer; writers Frances Townsend, Frank Ramirez, Karen Garrett; Conference Journal editor Eddie Edmonds; Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden; Donor Communications staff Mandy Garcia; and website staff Amy Heckert and Don Knieriem.]



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Swatara Church of the Brethren in Bethel, Pa., preaching on the Conference theme. During the worship service, two pieces of business usually part of the first business session were accomplished: a welcome of international guests from Brazil, Nigeria, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Spain; and the introduction of the ballot. A special concert by the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren Chancel Choir followed worship, along with a hearing on the Revision to Ministerial Leadership Policy and a hearing on the Guidelines for Implementation of the Congregational Ethics Paper.

A day of spiritual renewal

A full Sunday was dedicated to worship and study, with the goal of offering spiritual renewal to each Conference-goer. The day started with Sunday morning worship led by Philip Yancey, a popular speaker and writer who has authored more than 25 books including *What's*

Debbie Surin



So Amazing About Grace? and is editor-at-large for *Christianity Today*.

In the afternoon, Mark Yaconelli spoke for worship. Yaconelli is program director for the Center for Engaged Compassion at Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology and is a writer, speaker, retreat leader, and spiritual director who has spent much time working with youth. An evening worship service titled a "Concert of Prayer" was led by moderator Bob Krouse among others and included music and prayer and time for sharing in small groups. In between were numerous Equipping Workshops on a wide variety of topics, alumni luncheons hosted by several of the church-related colleges and universities, mutual help groups, a Brethren Revival Fellowship prayer and fasting session, and activities for children, youth, young adults, and single adults. The evening closed with a reception in the Exhibit Hall hosted by the Church of the Brethren staff and the Mission and Ministry Board.

On the agenda

Delegates handled a packed business agenda during Conference. Moderator-elect Nancy Sollenberger Heishman and Conference secretary James Beckwith assisted moderator Bob Krouse in leadership of the sessions.

The Conference recognized with enthusiasm the Brethren movement taking hold in Spain. The church got its start there about 10 years ago when Brethren from the Dominican Republic emigrated to Spain to find employment and started churches.

Delegates determined that the "Biblical Inspiration and Authority" paper is still relevant. "How do you



Regina Holmes

decide in 30 minutes what to do with a . . . 3,000-year-old book?" moderator Bob Krouse asked during the discussion of a query on biblical authority from Virgina District. The action of the 2013 Conference was "that the 1979 Annual Conference statement on Biblical Inspiration and Authority is still relevant and represents the position of the denomination today. We encourage its ongoing study in personal and corporate settings."

Delegates also adopted the Resolution Against Drone Warfare. Developed by the Office of Public Witness, the document was adopted by the Mission and Ministry Board earlier this year. Thought to be the first statement against military drones by an American church body, it addresses the use of drones in warfare in the context of a reaffirmation of the Brethren assertion that "war is sin" and cites scripture and previous Conference statements. The resolution calls for action by the church and its members, and by the President and Congress.

The Revision to Ministerial Leadership Polity was

received with appreciation, but returned to the Mission and Ministry Board "for revision in accordance with Standing Committee concerns, to be brought back to the 2014 Annual Conference." The Standing Committee of district delegates had spent time discussing the revision. Concerns centered in four areas: lack of mention of the plural non-salaried ministry (free ministry), the mandatory makeup of the cohort for each minister, transition of the new "commissioned minister" status to ordained minister, and what happens if there is a change of call for a commissioned minister.

A proposal from the Mission and Ministry Board responding to a query on equitable representation on the board did not receive the two-thirds majority required to pass. The officers ruled that the decision of the 2012 Conference to refer the concerns of the query to the Mission and Ministry Board still stands and that the board should do further work and bring a different answer to the 2014 Annual Conference. The officers provided an opportunity for delegates to submit recommendations to the board for its further work.

A proposal to increase the number of members of the Executive Committee of the Mission and Ministry Board was approved. Delegates also approved a 1.4 percent cost of living increase to the minimum cash salary table for pastors for 2014. **M**

Regina Holmes



Elections and appointments

Moderator-elect: David Steele, Middle Pennsylvania District executive.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: Shawn Flory Replogle, McPherson, Kan.

Bethany Seminary trustee, clergy: Frank Ramirez, Everett, Pa. Laity: Donna Shumate, Sparta, N.C.

Brethren Benefit Trust Board: Sara Huston Brenneman, Hershey, Pa.

Mission and Ministry Board from Area 2: Dennis Webb, Aurora,

Ill. Area 3: Jonathan Andrew Prater, Harrisonburg, Va.

Filling unexpired term of Rhonda Ritenour, who has resigned from the board: Donita Keister, Mifflinburg, Pa.

On Earth Peace Board: Chris Riley, Luray, Va.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee: Nancy Bowman, Fishersville, Va.

Appointments confirmed:

Mission and Ministry Board: Connie Burk Davis of Westminster, Md.

On Earth Peace Board: John Cassel, Oak Park, Ill. Michelet Hyppolite, North Woodmere, N.Y.

Bethany Seminary Board: Katherine Melhorn, Wichita, Kan. John Neff, Moneta, Va.

BBT Board: Carol Hess, Lancaster, Pa. Jerry Patterson, Ashburn, Va. Beth Sollenberger, Goshen, Ind.

Words from worship



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

■ **“We are called to look up so we can reach out, and we can look up and reach out if we don’t forget to kneel down. This is an exercise in humility.”**

—Annual Conference moderator Bob Krouse in the Conference opening sermon Saturday evening, speaking about the “exercises” that Christians are called to do to build up the spiritual body: look up, reach out, kneel down

■ **“Eight times Jesus was invited to dinner. At least half of the time those who invited him probably regretted it.”**

—Philip Yancey speaking at Sunday morning worship. He is author of more than 25 books, including *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* and is editor-at-large for *Christianity Today*

■ **“How can we make sure that we continue to experience sacred moments of love in a society driven by anxiety?”**

—Sunday afternoon preacher Mark Yaconelli, co-founder and program director for the Center for Engaged Compassion in Claremont, Calif.

■ **“There must be a core entree from which we all feast. . . . Jesus Christ is the core entree. Jesus said it best, ‘I am the bread of life.’”**

—Paul Munday, senior pastor of Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren, who gave the Monday sermon for the Conference worship service

■ **“We have a responsibility toward one another as members of the same body—the Body of Christ—and also as members of the Church of the Brethren.”**

—Pam Reist, pastor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, in Tuesday’s dialogue sermon with Paul Brubaker

■ **“In more than 58 years of living the transformed life, Jesus has become more precious to me—and the authority of the Scriptures have had an increasingly profound effect—on how I attempt to live out the transformed life.”**

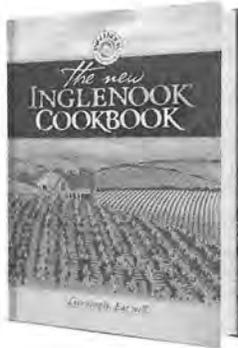
—Paul Brubaker, pastor at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren in Ephrata, Pa., in Tuesday’s dialogue sermon with Pam Reist

■ **“The moving of God in our midst impels our move toward our neighbors in their benefit.”**

—Suely Inhauser, pastor at Igreja da Irmandade-Brasil, Campinas, Brazil

Brethren Press unveils new books

Special events in the Conference Exhibit Hall included the unveiling of *The New Inglenook Cookbook* by Brethren Press—which arrived hot off the presses just prior to Conference. “I think you’ll find that it is more than a cookbook, it is a testament of our community,”



said Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden.

Brethren Press also unveiled a collection of writings by Kenneth I. Morse in e-book format, following up on the Conference choice of the late MESSENGER editor and hymn-writer’s “Move in Our Midst” for a theme. *Kindling Our Hearts: The Prophetic Voice of Ken Morse*, edited by Cheryl

Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services, includes writings by and about Morse including MESSENGER articles, editorials, essays, poetry, and photos.

The volunteers who make it all happen

Conference director Chris Douglas expressed her appreciation to all the volunteers who made Annual Conference happen, beginning with the elected members of Program and Arrangements Committee—Eric Bishop, Cindy Laprade Lattimer, and Christy Waltersdorff—to site co-coordinators Dewey and Melissa Williard, to the leaders of children and youth and other age groups, to the hundreds of other volunteers. Virgina District, which was the host district this year, provided many of the volunteers. Douglas also thanked graphic designer Debbie Noffsinger who designed the Conference logo.

conference by the numbers

2,481 people: Registration total for Conference included 721 delegates and 1,760 non-delegates. One new fellowship was welcomed: Living Stream in Pacific Northwest District.

134 productive units of blood: Collected by the Conference Blood Drive, sponsored by Brethren Disaster Ministries.

\$6,300 for hunger relief: Raised by the Quilt Auction of the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren.

37 walkers, 64 runners: Participants in the Brethren Benefit Trust

Fitness Challenge. Top finishers from left: Susan Fox, Chelsea Goss, Matthew Fahs-Brown, and Don Shankster.



\$1,000 donated to Brethren Press for church libraries: Given by an anonymous donor, winners of four daily drawings received a \$250 gift certificate to the



Conference bookstore: Black Rock Church of the Brethren, Brownsville Church of the Brethren, Lafayette Church of the Brethren, Round Hill Church of the Brethren.

\$4,895,000 income and expense: Budget for Church of the Brethren Core Ministries in 2014, set by the Mission and Ministry Board.



60 consecutive Annual Conferences attended by Paul White: Paul White, a Church of the Brethren minister from Roanoke, Va., has attended 60 consecutive Annual Conferences, beginning in 1954 in Ocean Grove, N.J., and continuing through this year. Paul said that Annual Conference is in his DNA. His parents met at Conference, honeymooned at Conference, and he met his wife at Conference in Norfolk, Va., in 1984.

White, 85, has served churches in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. In the course of the 60 years, White has traveled more than 41,000 miles and has been to all 50 states. He noted that when Conference was on the west coast he flew to Hawaii and Alaska so he could visit those states. He has been a delegate a number of times, and served terms on Standing Committee and the former General Board.



Clara Ringal

Time for the gavel to go?

by Elaine Sollenberger

How many Annual Conference moderators come to mind who have used the moderator's gavel as gavels are intended to be used?

Usually that gavel shows up just in time for the “passing”—that is of moving from the hands of the outgoing moderator to those of the incoming one at the close of Annual Conference. Until then it likely stays in the moderator's hotel room during the week—assuming that he/she remembered to pack it—until the official passing. Often the outgoing moderator will say something like, “Since a gavel is a symbol of authority, I have chosen not to use this gavel in that way. It's traditional to do this, so I want to pass it along to you to have for the year ahead.” That gets close to an apology for the gavel's presence!

My limited research of the history and use of the gavel offered several insights. It clearly is a symbol of authority; it gives the user the “highest authority.” By the number of taps it can mean to sit, to compel attention, to stand up, to signal an action has been completed, or to announce adjournment. Judges, auctioneers and many lodge presidents regularly use a gavel.

I was curious to see if any scriptural references would relate, even remotely. One of the synonyms of the word gavel is “maul” or a kind of hammer. The King James Bible has such a reference in Proverbs 25:18: “A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a *maul* and a sword, and a sharp arrow.” Not too helpful!

During the year in which an individual serves as moderator for the denomination, the gavel is housed in that home. Since it is not an expectation that the gavel will be used at any time other than Annual Conference, it usually stays in its box. I'm assuming that instead of using the gavel to signal various moments during the business sessions of Annual Conference, we have chosen instead to use lights—yellow for warning, red for “enough already!” That saves the moderator from the unwanted task of banging that gavel and flaunting a “highest authority” moment.

Given its intended symbolism and its non-use by the Brethren, I suggest we plan a retirement event for the

Church of the Brethren moderator's gavel. That event could note the history and significance of the moderator's gavel for the Brethren and then prayerfully serve to usher it to the archives. Archiving the moderator's gavel would open the way for considering a new and more appropriate symbol for the Church of the Brethren and for the annual moderator exchange.

One such symbol might be a Peace Pole. Those come with the hopeful and encouraging words: “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in more than one language. A small version of the pole would fit nicely on the officers' table during business sessions. A larger one could be used in the Conference worship center, either occasionally or regularly. The material used to make Peace Poles varies; some are made with very lightweight material, making them easily moved from one place to another.

Perhaps the best reason for using a Peace Pole is the symbolism. It would require no apology! It could travel with the moderator during the year, get outside of its box, and become a visible symbol that would remind persons and congregations of the peace position held by the Church of the Brethren. Might it also call us to work more diligently to bring peace to the denomination, to encourage us to continue to work at healing the brokenness we feel among us?

Again, how many Conference moderators have used the gavel as Robert's Rules suggest? The answer may just be the best reason to consider a home in the archives for the moderator's gavel and to open the way for considering a new, more appropriate symbol, one the moderators could pass with enthusiasm and joy.

A scripture to suggest? Isaiah 43:18-19: “Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” **👉**

Elaine Sollenberger is the first woman to serve as Annual Conference moderator in 1989 and again in 1998, thus completing two historical firsts. She was appointed by Annual Conference 1997 delegates to fill the position of moderator vacated by moderator-elect Jimmy Ross who resigned for health reasons.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

All together

Ohio's Miami Valley welcomes the Fifth Brethren World Assembly

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford and Frank Ramirez

Extending greetings to those present at the Fifth Brethren World Assembly on July 11-14 in Brookville, Ohio, Larry E. Heisey of the Brethren Heritage Center board noted the unique location of the meeting.

All of the seven main Brethren groups in North America descended from the believers brought together in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708 are represented in the Miami Valley near Dayton.

"This makes us unique in Brethren-ness," Heisey said. Brethren spirituality was the theme of the assembly. The

gathering is held every five years with sponsorship from the Brethren Encyclopedia Board. This year's assembly was hosted by the Brethren Heritage Center, a nonprofit organization based in Brookville, Ohio, and started in 2001 to preserve historical and current information on the various Brethren bodies.

The uniqueness of a cooperative venture between the seven Brethren groups represented on the Brethren Encyclopedia Board and at the Brethren Heritage Center was remarked upon by several people. Donald Miller, former general secretary of the Church of the Brethren and

"I think there's a real hunger for authentic Brethren witness, especially with regards to community... and obedience to Jesus."

—Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service for the Church of the Brethren

“What a time it will be when all of God’s children sit down to supper.”

—Keith Bailey, an elder of the Dunkard Brethren

professor emeritus at Bethany Seminary, credited the impetus for such conversations to peacemaking icon and On Earth Peace founder M.R. Zigler, who also helped to start the Brethren Encyclopedia.

The planning team for the 2013 assembly was chaired by Robert E. Alley of the Church of the Brethren, and included Jeff Bach, Church of the Brethren; Brenda Colijn, Brethren Church; Milton Cook, Dunkard Brethren; Tom Julien, Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches; Gary Kochheiser, Conservative Grace Brethren Churches, International; Michael Miller, Old German Baptist Brethren Church-New Conference. The Old German Baptist Brethren also are represented on the Brethren Encyclopedia board.

Although the event was dubbed a “world” assembly, the majority of Brethren who attended were from the United States, many local to the Miami Valley. A group of Nigerians attended from Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Bernd Julius, who had



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Coyford

been on the planning committee for the 2008 assembly in Schwarzenau on the 300th anniversary of the Brethren, brought greetings from the village in Germany where the Brethren movement began.

Like peanut butter and chocolate

Having the Brethren Heritage Center host a meeting convened by the Brethren Encyclopedia Board was a match made in Brethren heaven—like peanut butter and chocolate, or perhaps more like chocolate and even more chocolate.

The Brethren Encyclopedia Inc. has, since it start, provided the platform for cooperative work and planning between the Brethren bodies. Likewise, the Brethren Heritage Center has exemplified the same cooperation and fellowship among all the Brethren groups in the Miami Valley.

Differences in dress, beliefs, and practice were immediately apparent, but the assembly succeeded in fostering congenial discussions and fellowship largely because it was not a business meeting and there was no agenda for action by the



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Coyford

Brethren Heritage Center This unique non-profit organization is run by volunteers and dedicated to preserving historical and current information concerning the various Brethren denominations traced back to the baptisms of 1708 in Schwarzenau, Germany. The uniqueness of the center in Brookville, Ohio, stems from its placement in the Miami Valley of Ohio, an area on the western side of Dayton that boasts at least one congregation of each of the seven main Brethren bodies in North America.

The center also serves as the only archive for some “old order” groups. It was begun with the collection of Donald R. Bowman of the Southern Ohio District Historical Committee of the Church of the Brethren, and the collection of Fred Benedict of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church. In 1999 a group of church leaders including Benedict, Larry E. Heisey, and Mark Flory-Steury pledged to help out. By January 2001, members of old order groups had agreed to meet with the Historical Committee, and the Brethren Heritage Center was born.

Housed on the basement level of the Brookside Plaza shopping center, the Brethren Heritage Center stores a collection of valuable historical information in the form of periodicals and records and books, offers a well stocked bookstore of new and used books, and displays museum quality Brethren artifacts including quilts and bonnets, a love feast table setting, a cabinet used in an Underground Railroad home, and even a buggy among other pieces of interest. Contact the Brethren Heritage Center, 428 N. Wolf Creek St., Suite H1, Brookville, OH 45309-1297; 937-833-5222; amack1708@brethrenheritagecenter.org.

“The Brethren have never tried to be uniquely Brethren. They have tried to be authentically Christian. . . . To be authentically Brethren is to be radically obedient to Jesus.” —Bill Johnson of the Brethren Church

Brethren family tree

Church of the Brethren

The Church of the Brethren counts some 118,880 members in 988 congregations, 42 fellowships, and 13 projects in 23 districts across the United States and Puerto Rico (statistics from the most recent *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*).

Missions and sister churches are located in Nigeria, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Haiti, India, and Spain.

Denominational staff are headquartered at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., with the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., housing disaster relief and other programs. Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., is the denomination's school of theology. The main periodical is *MESSENGER*.

Six colleges and universities also relate to the Church of the Brethren: Bridgewater (Va.) College; Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.; Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind.; McPherson (Kan.) College; and the University of La Verne in southern California. Stanley Noffsinger serves as general secretary. For more information go to www.brethren.org.

Old German Baptist Brethren Church

This conservative body of Brethren was the first to split off from the main Brethren movement, in 1881. A significant first meeting took place in a barn in the Miami River Valley of Ohio. Sometimes nicknamed “old order,” the Old German Baptist Brethren separated from more progressive expressions of the church in order to preserve and maintain historic Brethren beliefs and practices.

As of 2009, before the emergence of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church-New Conference, the denomination reported having 46 congregations and 3,748 members (statistics from the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 2011*). The Old German Baptist Brethren emphasize simple living and plain dress, avoid using some technological advances, maintain traditional practices surrounding love feast and footwashing, and continue the tradition of free ministry. *The Vindicator* is the main periodical of the Old German Baptist Brethren, with offices in Englewood, Ohio.

Brethren Church

Organized by progressive-minded Brethren in the late 19th century, the Brethren Church in 1883 split off from the main body of the church, which has continued as the Church of the Brethren. The Brethren Church is headquartered in Ashland, Ohio, and includes 112 congregations with 10,227 members in 9 districts across the United States (statistics from the 2011 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, Abingdon Press).

The main periodical is *The Brethren Evangelist*. Ashland University and Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio, are educational institutions of the Brethren Church. Kenneth Hunn serves as executive director and acting director of US and International Ministries. For more information go to www.brethrenchurch.org.

Dunkard Brethren Church

The Dunkard Brethren Church withdrew from the Church of the Brethren in the 1920s over “dissatisfaction over eroding church standards.” The term “Dunkard” is from the German “tunker,” referring to the Brethren mode of full immersion baptism. The Dunkard Brethren observe a simplicity of lifestyle, and maintain historic Brethren ordinances and traditions, although they also embrace electronic communications to the point of maintaining a website and engage in domestic and international mission work.

The Dunkard Brethren Church includes congregations organized in four districts spread out from eastern Pennsylvania to California. Missions are carried out with the Navajo in New Mexico, and in Kenya. Dunkard Brethren missionaries also work in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nepal, and in other countries through an Anabaptist mission network. For more information go to www.dunkardbrethren-church.com.



Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches also is a product of the “progressive” line, dividing off from the Brethren Church in 1939. With a strong focus on mission and evangelism, it has its center in the educational ministries of Grace College and Seminary in Winona Lake, Ind. More than 250 congregations and 23 districts of Grace Brethren are scattered across the United States, with a couple of congregations in Canada, and missions and missionaries in many different countries.

The fellowship is described on its website as “part of a multi-national network of churches whose values are defined by . . . pursuit of biblical truth, biblical relationships, and biblical mission.” Outside of North America, the group claims “nearly 3,000 Grace Brethren churches, hundreds of new church starts, and an ever-growing number of cooperative ministry initiatives.”

Church ministries are organized under several different boards, including Grace Brethren International Missions, Grace Brethren Home Missions, Grace Brethren Navajo Ministries, and more. The *Brethren Missionary Herald* is the main periodical. For more information go to www.fgbc.org.

Conservative Grace Brethren Churches, International

In recent years, the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches, International has separated from the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches to form its own organization of churches. Conservative Grace Brethren congregations number around 40, located in 12 US states. The Conservative Grace Brethren endorse home mission points as well as foreign mission plants and projects, with the group’s website highlighting missions in India and Cameroon. *The Voice* newsletter is the main periodical. For more information go to www.cgbc.org.

Old German Baptist Brethren Church-New Conference

In 2009 the Old German Baptist Brethren Church-New Conference separated from the Old German Baptist Brethren Church. The New Conference is organized in 7 regions and 32 “districts” or meetings across the United States. *The Testimony*, with offices in New Paris, Ohio, is the main periodical. For more information go to <http://ogbbc.org>.

different churches. Instead it was a place for Brethren to be present with each other and with God. Participants expressed a hunger to teach and learn more about a shared heritage, and simply to be together as a faith family.

Presentations, tours, worship—and ice cream

Keynote presentations on Brethren spirituality in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries set the tone for the gathering. Other main sessions focused on various aspects of Brethren spirituality including the place of Jesus, Word and Spirit, community, and ordinances such as love feast, footwashing, and anointing.

Seminars and panel discussions gave insight into how Brethren are doing evangelism and mission, the role of the Bible in Brethren spirituality, spiritual formation, worship practices, hymnody and other devotional literature and poetry, including the writings and poetry of Alexander Mack Jr., and Brethren separation from the world and engagement with the world.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

A panel of youth and young adults gave responses to close out the presentations.

Bus tours took participants to see Miami Valley sites important to Brethren history including places related to the schisms of the 1880s when the “conservatives” (who became the Old German Baptist Brethren) and the “progressives” (who became the Brethren Church and the Grace Brethren) first organized and broke off from the body that continues as the Church of the Brethren.

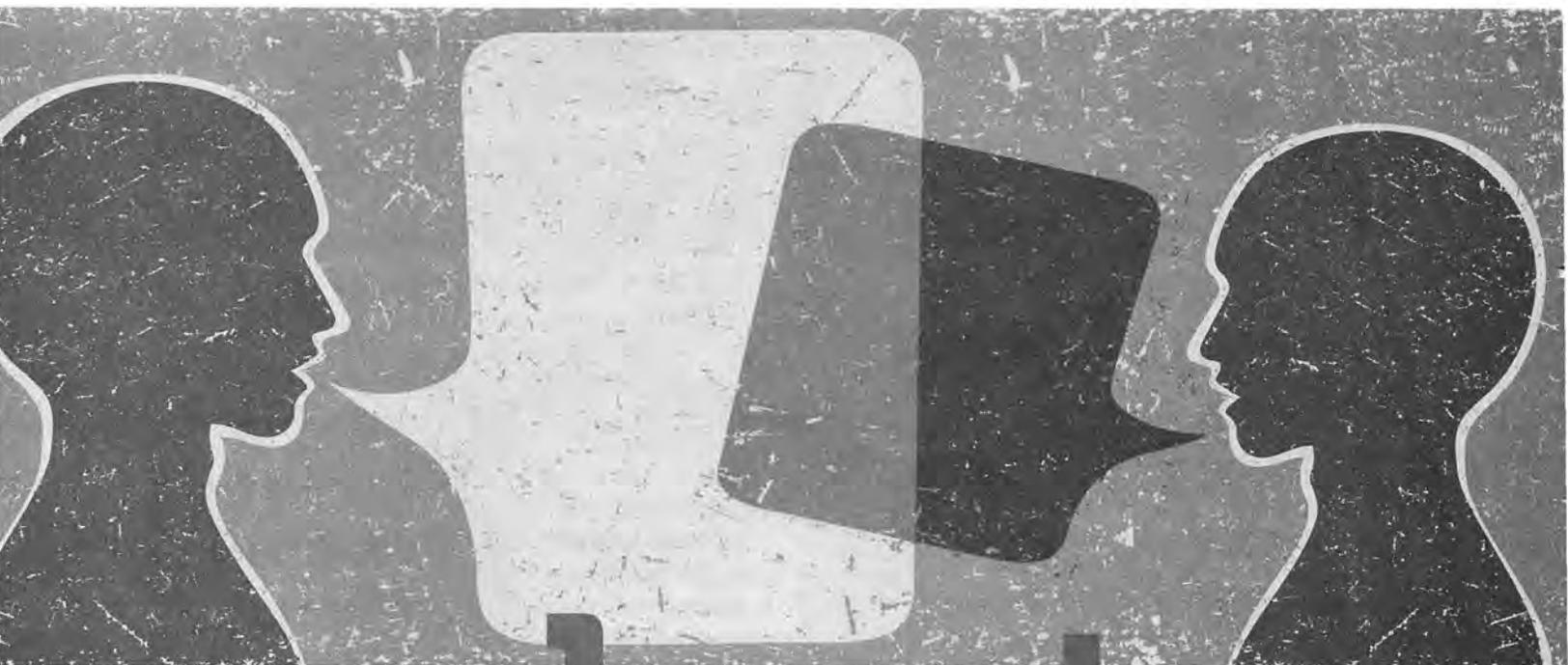
Tour groups also visited Lower Miami Church of the Brethren, a “parent” congregation for the Brethren churches of the area, among other sites.

Each evening the assembly ate and worshiped at a local congregation, hosted by Brookville Grace Brethren Church and Salem Church of the Brethren. Ice cream socials closed out the days.

More about the Brethren World Assembly

Find a photo album from the assembly at www.brethren.org/album. DVD recordings of each major presentation and worship service are available, with taping by videographer David Sollenberger and crew. DVDs are \$5 each, or any three for \$10, with a shipping fee added. Order DVDs from David Sollenberger, 211 Grandview Ct., North Manchester, IN 46962; 260-982-4962 or 717-926-8617; or e-mail orders to LSVIDEO@comcast.net. A shipping and handling charge will be added to each order. 

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren. Frank Ramirez is pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.



Words that **hurt** by Chris Keating

Hannah Jacobs spends her hours on Facebook searching for hurtful words.

She is searching not because she's trying to expand her vocabulary or because she's fascinated with crude humor. Rather, the New York City mom hunts for derogatory words and pages. As the parent of a teenager with an intellectual disability, Jacobs looks for Facebook pages that use hurtful speech. According to the website *Disabilityscoop.com*, actions by individuals such as Jacobs and by others have prompted Facebook to crack down on offensive posts, including content designed to incite violence against women or that is cruel toward certain groups of people.

The writer of the Epistle of James couldn't have imagined Facebook, or any form of modern communication for that matter. But that doesn't mean the writer's exposition regarding speech is less timely today than it was for the early church. Indeed, in an era filled with toxic political discourse and scandals involving celebrities' use of racial slurs, James' words seem to apply even more. As commentators note, nearly two out of every five verses in James have to do with speaking. From the very beginning, James wants Christians to understand the damage caused by unbridled tongues.

James reminds the Christian community that words can destroy as well as create, and calls the community to pursue language and actions that reflect Christ's grace, so that we may be "quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (1:19).

James is an epistle of wisdom, a word about how

Christians should endeavor to speak to one another.

Though the letter is dotted with references to speech, the heart of James' theology regarding the use of the tongue comes in chapter 3, verses 1 through 12. Imagine the effect of these words if they were read as a letter addressed to your congregation. Imagine the look on the face of the chair of the Christian education committee as the opening line is read aloud: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters." Great! And just who is going to teach the sixth grade Sunday school class now?

But the squirming gets worse as the letter continues. The tongue is a fire! The tongue stains the whole body! It sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell!

That would be a very quiet sanctuary, indeed.

I am certain that whoever might be reading these words in church would understand that it's not just the teachers who are the object of James' ire. Like celebrity chef Paula Deen, we realize that most of us have said words we regret. There isn't anyone who has escaped James' rebuke. We're all like raucous children who deserve our parents' scolding—and possibly even a good mouth-washing.

What we say matters because our words can both create and destroy. Cursing and blessings flow from the same source, says James (vv. 10-12). As *The Message* paraphrases this, "My friends, this can't go on. A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and brackish the next, does it? Apple trees don't bear strawberries, do they? Raspberry bushes don't bear apples, do they?"

And yet many times we dilute the impact of our words, shrugging them off as not being very important in the long run. Seconds after quarterback Joe Flacco led his Baltimore Ravens to a Super Bowl victory, he was captured swearing on national television. “It’s freaking awesome,” he told a teammate—except he didn’t say “freaking.” When I wrote about Flacco’s colorful outburst for another publication, many readers scolded me for pointing out Flacco’s verbal flaw. “Get a life,” said one. “Why does this matter?” asked another.

On the one hand, it probably doesn’t matter what one athlete says to another after a terrific victory. No harm, no foul—perhaps. But shift the context a bit, say to words exchanged between opposing teams during a high school game. Down on the field, one team begins mocking the other, and the epithets flow freely. Macho trash-talking begins to take hold.

But trash-talk on the field soon becomes hate speech in the classroom, or harassing comments in the workplace. It can even become boasting from the pulpit or stereotyping on television. Sooner or later, we move far from the creative, loving, and just ways of living and speaking that God envisions for us. “Such wisdom does not come down from above,” remarks James in 3:15.

It’s those long-term effects that caused New Jersey officials to place a ban on trash-talking in high school sports. The New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association and the state’s attorney general recently announced they would penalize teams engaged in such acts based on reporting by referees.

We might say, “Well, it’s just a Friday night game. What does it really matter?” But what happens in real life, when there are no referees around to police our conversations? It matters, suggests James, because God has given us the ability to share in God’s creative work. It matters because God has given human beings the right to use speech for naming, creating, and continuing God’s creative work in the world.

James is emphatic that our speech does matter. James understands the power of speech. Speech creates the foundation for a good life, and is the indication of God’s presence in our lives. Writing in the journal *Christian Reflection*, theologian Todd Still of Baylor University notes that for Christians this is more than simply modeling the syrupy sentimentality of “Thumper’s Rule” from the movie *Bambi*: “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say nothin’ at all.” Instead, our speech is a reflection of our identity as God’s children.

Of course, at times Christians will become angry with each other. We will disagree, and we may be vocal in our disagreements. We will get mad, and will make mistakes. Our words do not need to destroy one another, however. If we are faithful to James’ instructions, we will learn the wisdom that comes from humbly understanding how our words can also bring healing.

A few days after the end of the Civil War, President Lincoln made what would become his last public address. He spoke to a hurting country, a deeply divided and wounded nation. Yet his words were not toxic or bitter. His words conveyed hope and offered healing as he said, “Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these states and the Union; and each forever after, innocently indulge his own opinion whether, in doing the acts, he brought the States from without, into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it.”

Healing words—words that sought to reach beyond divisions, words that extended grace, words that kindled hope. Words few of us can imagine being said today. ❧

Chris Keating is pastor of Woodlawn Chapel Presbyterian Church in Wildwood, Mo. Serving as MESSENGER’s Bible study writer during 2013, Keating is connected to the Church of the Brethren through the University of La Verne and an internship with MESSENGER in the 1980s.

James is emphatic that our *speech does matter*. James understands the power of speech. Speech creates the foundation for a good life, and is the indication of God’s presence in our lives.

Young adult conference at Camp Pine Lake

More than 40 young adults from across the country gathered at Camp Pine Lake in Eldora, Iowa, for the annual Young Adult Conference. The event took place over Memorial Day weekend from May 25-27. Attendees had a great time filled with laughter, conversation, coffee, and four-square games, despite what was otherwise a cool, rainy weekend. Activities included workshops, small groups, a talent show, and a campfire (enjoyed inside the warm, dry lodge).

The conference theme was "Voice . . . the Stones Would Shout Out!" based on Luke 19:36-40. Tyler Goss and Marie Benner-Rhoades coordinated worship services, which were led by Eric Landram, Kay Guyer, Jonathan Brenneman, and Joanna Shenk, with music leadership from Jacob Crouse.

Next year's YAC will take place at Camp Brethren Woods in Keezletown, Va.

Kelsey Murray



One of the activities at Young Adult Conference 2013 involved the "painting" of a mural with feet and toes, and then a new version of the Brethren tradition of feetwashing.



Kelsey Murray

Remembering Church of the Brethren's 'Mr. Songman'

Country singer Slim Whitman, 90, who was a longtime member and deacon emeritus at Jacksonville (Fla.) Church of the Brethren, passed away June 19. He was the subject of the book *Mr. Songman*, written by Kenneth L. Gibble and published by Brethren Press in 1982.

Remembered by friends in the congregation and Atlantic Southeast District as a gentle and loving man, Whitman retained his Brethren simplicity even as he gained in popularity as a performer. He is remembered in media reports as "the high-pitched yodeler who sold millions of records." He recorded more than 65 albums, and was known for his three-octave singing range.

"His career spanned six decades, beginning in the late 1940s, but he achieved cult figure status in the 1980s. His visage as an ordinary guy singing romantic ballads struck a responsive chord with the public," said the *Huffington Post*, which quoted Whitman's good humored comment about a famous TV advertisement for his music: "It buys fuel for the boat."

Slim Whitman performed at the MESSENGER dinner at the Annual

Conference in Wichita, Kan., in 1982. For the occasion, editor Kermion Thomasson drew a sketch for the cover of the dinner program showing the singer playing his guitar and wearing an outfit adorned with sequins. Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden, at the time on the MESSENGER staff, recalls the flurry of activity to prepare for the dinner and how the "sequins" on the program illustrations were created by hand with glue and glitter.

Whitman was for many years a deacon at Jacksonville Church of the Brethren, where his wife Alma Geraldine (Jerry) often cooked the love feast meal, reported family friend Ruby Raymer. "They were good church members," Raymer said. The Jacksonville congregation would gather for a Sunday evening Bible study in the 1960s and '70s, when Jerry would play the piano and Slim would lead a hymn-sing.



Children's Disaster Services helps after Asiana crash

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) provided a team of Critical Response Childcare volunteers to respond to the July 6 crash landing of Asiana Airlines Flight 214 at San Francisco International Airport. Five volunteers from the program's Critical Response Childcare Team worked with children for three full days from July 10-12.

The group opened a child care center at the Family Assistance Center near the airport, working in cooperation with the American Red Cross.

The Critical Response Childcare team is a group of experienced CDS volunteers who have received additional training that prepares them to work with children after an aviation incident or other mass casualty event. The presence of a compassionate care giver, along with carefully selected play activities, has a significant impact on the recovery of a child who has experienced such a trauma.

The six-member team is on call each month, ready to travel within four hours of deployment by the American Red Cross. They work in centers where those affected by the incident participate in briefings and receive support. Since 1997 the Critical Response Childcare team has responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and at least seven aviation incidents.

Children's Disaster Services



CDS has also sent teams recently to Oklahoma following the devastating tornadoes. A volunteer is shown here at the Family Assistance Center near Moore, Oklahoma.

Church of the Brethren funds help in Angola, Palestine, and Dominican Republic

Brethren Disaster Ministries staff have directed allocations from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to SHARE in Angola, and to the Shepherd Society of Bethlehem Bible College in Palestine. Recent grants from the Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF) have gone to a partnership project with the Shepherd Society in Palestine, and to an agriculture project of ECHO, Inc., in the Dominican Republic.

An EDF allocation of \$17,000 responds to a SHARE appeal aimed at providing food resources, bicycles, wheelchairs, school materials, and hygiene kits to children affected by almost three decades of protracted civil war in Angola. SHARE has been a partner organization to Brethren Disaster Ministries for more than a decade. The grant will support students in three schools in Bié, Kwanza Norte, and Kuando Kubango provinces.

As part of a larger coordinated relief program, the resources and material aid increases the likelihood of SHARE receiving a USAID grant for a food package program.

An EDF allocation of \$15,000 to the Shepherd Society in Bethlehem, Palestine, the charitable arm of Bethlehem Bible College, will aid Palestinian people living in the West Bank who find themselves confined to their towns without adequate employment. The allocation will provide support and relief to a minimum of 500 needy people in the Bethlehem area with urgent medical care and a family food subsidy.

The GFCF also has made an allocation of \$10,000 for a partnership with the Shepherd Society of Bethlehem Bible College. The money will help unemployed Palestinian workers with assistance for

job creation and micro-projects.

A GFCF allocation of \$4,400 has been given to ECHO Inc. for scholarships for participants attending a Caribbean-wide agricultural conference in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, in October. The conference will provide a network and training opportunity for those involved in alleviating hunger and poverty in the Caribbean region. The grant will provide scholarships for 20 participants. ECHO is assuring the Church of the Brethren up to five scholarships to be used for Brethren coming from Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The balance of the scholarships will be awarded to other participants by ECHO staff, based on financial need.

For more about the Emergency Disaster Fund go to www.brethren.org/edf. For more about the Global Food Crisis Fund go to www.brethren.org/gfcf.

upcoming events

Sept. 2-6

National Older Adult Conference (NOAC), Lake Junaluska (N.C.) Conference Center

Sept. 13-15 Pacific Northwest District Conference, Camp Koinonia, Cle Elum, Wash.

Sept. 15-Oct. 4 Brethren Volunteer Service Fall Unit

Sept. 20-21 Children's Disaster Services Workshop, New Haven, Conn.

Sept. 20-21 Northern Indiana District Conference, Camp Mack, Milford, Ind.

Sept. 20-21 Southern Pennsylvania District Conference, Greencastle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Sept. 27-28 Idaho District Conference, Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren

Oct. 4-5 Atlantic Northeast District Conference, Leffler Chapel, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

Oct. 4-5 Middle Pennsylvania District Conference, Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa.

Oct. 4-5 Missouri and Arkansas District Conference, Roach, Mo.

National Youth Conference music and speech contests

The National Youth Conference (NYC) office is accepting entries for the Youth Music Contest and the Youth Speech Contest, as well as applications for youthworker positions for the 2014 event.

Youth who enjoy writing music are invited to write a song based on the theme "Called by Christ, Blessed for the Journey Together" (Ephesians 4:1-7) and submit it to the NYC office. The winner will have the opportunity to perform



the song on stage during NYC.

Youth also are invited to prayerfully consider what message the NYC 2014 theme has for them, their congregations, and the larger denomination, and express that in a speech. Two speech contest winners will share their messages during a worship service at NYC.

All entries must be submitted by Feb. 16, 2014, either by uploading via a link on the NYC website (coming soon) or by mail to the NYC office at 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

The NYC office is accepting youthworker applications until Nov. 2. Youthworkers are dedicated volunteers (college age and older) who help carry out the plans of the National Youth Cabinet during the week of NYC.

For more information on these opportunities, go to www.brethren.org/yya/nyc/forms.html. Contact the NYC office with any questions at cobyouth@brethren.org or call 847-429-4385. Or visit www.brethren.org/nyc.

Peace Day 2013: With whom will you make peace?

Peace Day is coming up on Sept. 21, and this year's theme asks one simple question: With whom will you make peace?

Peace Day (formerly called the International Day of Prayer for Peace) is a rallying call to bring people together to think about how peace can transform relationships and communities. This year's Peace Day theme is a reminder of the situations and relationships into which we have the ability to bring peace. Communities are filled with opportunities to bring the peace of Jesus into neighborhoods, for the possibility of transformation and reconciliation.

Last year, more than 170 congregations participated, including more than 90 Church of the Brethren congregations. The public events of Peace Day 2012 included prayer, cultural sharing, music, and art that brought communities together to talk and pray with one another.

On Earth Peace, the Church of the Brethren, the World Council of Churches, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries invite and encourage the organizing of Peace Day events this year on or near Sept. 21.

Already churches and groups have signed up from places as different as Pennsylvania and the Congo. Some possibilities for involvement: Keep up with the latest news on Peace Day 2013, or sign up as a church or group to participate at <http://peacedaypray.tumblr.com/join>. "Like" Peace Day on Facebook at www.facebook.com/peacedaypray. Follow Peace Day on Twitter @peacedaypray.



PERSONNEL CHANGES

Deborah Brehm has been promoted to manager, Office of Human Resources for the Church of the Brethren. This salaried staff position is a reflection of the breadth and depth of responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources. Brehm began her employment with the church on Jan. 30, 2012.

Amy Heckert resigned as media support specialist with the Church of the Brethren on July 26. As of July 15 she had completed 22 years of service with church-related agencies, first hired by Brethren Benefit Trust in 1991. She moved to a job with the former General Board in 2000, and has worked for the Church of the Brethren since then. Most recently, her work has focused on creation and maintenance of web pages for Brethren.org, including widely used denominational tools such as the online calendar. In a major website project, she helped move the denominational website to its current host. For many years, she has been a key person in the Press Rooms at Annual Conference and National Youth Conference, where she served as webmaster and created a welcoming environment for volunteers.

Kendra N. Johnson is manager of the office of Global Mission and Service for the Church of the Brethren, as of Sept. 1. She will work at the denomination's General Offices in Elgin, Ill. Most recently she has been working in the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) office, serving as orientation assistant and staff volunteer. She began volunteering at the General Offices on Jan. 2, 2012, after completing a term of service in BVS at the German Branch of Peace Brigades International in Hamburg.

Andrew Pankratz of Abilene, Kan., began June 24 as archival intern for 2013-14 in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. He is a student at Emporia State University in Kansas, where he is working on a master of arts in history degree, and is planning to work on a master's degree in library science. His past experience has included work as a student archival assistant at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Hillsboro, Kan., and a summer internship at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene.

October Is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Get help.... Get educated.

If you are in an abusive relationship or want to learn more about domestic violence, help and resources are available:



The Hotline
1 (800) 799-SAFE
1 (800) 799-7233

National Domestic Violence Hotline
www.thehotline.org

Domestic Violence Awareness Project
www.nrcdv.org/dvam

FaithTrust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

**Church of the Brethren
 Family Life Ministry**
www.brethren.org/family



For continued updates on this important issue, "like" National Domestic Violence Month on Facebook



Church of the Brethren

Faith-based travel at its best with TourMagination!

Experience God's world with other believers on our range of tours.

CRUISES

- LEGENDARY RHINE & MOSELLE CRUISE (May 30-June 12/2014)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 3-13/2014)
- HAWAIIAN ISLANDS (Feb 15-28/2015)

ECO-ADVENTURE TOURS

- CHINA & YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (Nov 1-15/2013)
- THE AMAZON RAINFOREST & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (Jan 16-26/2014)
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-26/2014)
- POLAR BEAR EXPRESS (Oct 16-25/2014)
- ANTARCTICA (Jan 3-15/2015)

EDUCATIONAL TOURS

- BRITISH ISLES (ENGLAND, SCOTLAND & WALES) (Sept 13-25/2013)
- EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (Dec 9-15/2013)
- JAMAICA: ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY & FRUITS (Jan 18-27/2014)
- JAPAN & KOREA (Sept 15-25/2014)
- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA (Oct 10-21/2014)
- VIETNAM & SINGAPORE (Nov 10-24/2014)
- CUBA (Jan 9-18/2015)
- AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND (Jan 30-Feb 19/2015)
- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in KENYA & TANZANIA (Feb 6-18/2015)

CUSTOM TOURS

- HAITI CUSTOM TOUR (Feb 27-March 9/2014)

- HESSTON COLLEGE STUDENT CHOIR TOUR to EUROPE (May 13-June 3/2014)

HOLY LAND TOURS

- HOLY LAND: HARVEST the OLIVES & EXPERIENCE the BIBLE with Pastor Jamie Gerber (Oct 12-21/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with Pastor Rich Bucher (Nov 5-14/2013)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with Pastor Phil Wagler (Feb 12-20/2014)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with Pastor David Boshart (April 24-May 3/2014)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with Pastor Darrel Toews (Oct 19-28/2014)
- FROM NAZARETH to ROME with Pastor Jim Brown (Nov 3-15/2014)
- EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL with Tam Yoder Neufeld (May 6-23/2015)

HERITAGE TOURS

- INDIA: HISTORY, CHANGE and the CHURCH (Oct 6-21/2013)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with John Ruth (June 24-July 7/2014)
- AMISH EUROPEAN HERITAGE TOUR with John Ruth (July 6-28/2014)
- POLAND & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY (Sept 18-Oct 1/2014)
- RUSSIA & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY (May 19-June 6/2015)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with John Ruth (June 10-23/2015)



BOOK YOUR LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY TODAY! (800) 565-0451

E-MAIL: office@tourmagination.com

WEB: www.tourmagination.com

Reg. # 50014322

Finding God in *Oblivion*

It was supposed to be nothing more than an opportunity to relax and unwind, to be entertained. I hadn't been to the movies in months, and I enjoy science fiction for its creativity more often than for its message. The review I had heard on the radio suggested *Oblivion* would be fine, but several notches short of special.

But less than 24 hours later, I found myself scratching out notes on my church bulletin between opening hymn and prayer, between offertory and anthem.

Oblivion had more to it than I had anticipated.

The story takes place on a post-apocalyptic Earth ravaged by war and left desolate and dying. A large, pyramidal object suspended in Earth's orbit oversees the work of two humans—Jack (Tom Cruise) and Victoria (Andrea Riseborough)—who are responsible for patrolling what used to be the Eastern Seaboard. While Victoria guides him from their futuristic home, Jack monitors, repairs, and main-



RYAN HARRISON

tains weaponized drones that ceaselessly patrol the skies ensuring that the many large machines hovering over—and literally sucking up—the Atlantic ocean continue to operate despite the scattered presence of the remaining aliens (referred to as “scavs”). These machines transmute seawater into energy used, ostensibly, by the vast number of humans who fled the planet upon its demise to take refuge on one of Saturn's moons. Jack and Victoria are thus in selfless service to all of the remaining displaced members of humanity . . . or so they think.

Nearly half the movie has elapsed before your grasp on the story is quite suddenly wrenched loose. (Spoiler alert!) Here's my attempt at making the resulting complex story quickly

digestible: You learn that, in fact, the giant pyramid is not of human design, but alien. You also learn that the “scavs” are actually human refugees in hiding, and that Jack and Victoria are two of a countless number of identical clones created by the alien presence and sent to Earth under false pretenses.

Knowing all of this is important, because it supports an anomaly: the fragments of memories and flashbacks that Jack has experienced from the film's outset, despite the “mandatory memory wipe” prior to the start of his mission on Earth. As the truth unfolds before him, Jack is confronted by the complete upheaval and reversal of his worldview. In an instant, he is changed from humanity's hero to its unwitting fool, complicit in the Earth's demise and its people's destruction. He wrestles with the reality that he has been used—thousands of times—as the clones made from his DNA were employed by the alien as its brainwashed and well-armed invaders to conquer his own planet and its people.

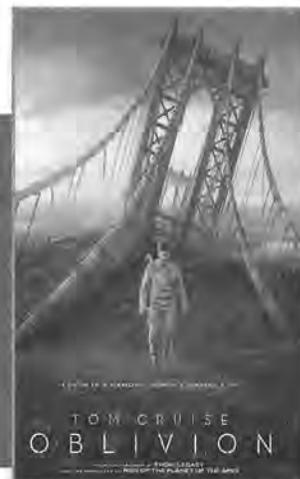
Take a breath. Now, finally, I think I can help explain why I consider this film “spiritual cinema.” Within *Oblivion* hide a number of “theophilosophical” gems.

The first of these that came to my mind was the reminder of the Earth's preciousness and our part in preserving the planet's health. The alien presence came to Earth not for its people, knowledge, or culture, but for its resources. Once the invader has spoiled or stolen them, the planet is transformed into something dreadfully inhospitable, devoid of life and, therefore, of value.

A clever dichotomy deepens this theme. By using countless clones of Jack and Victoria as its army, the alien successfully manipulated humans into appropriating Earth's natural resources in support of its own needs at the planet's catastrophic expense. And yet, Jack also harbors a secret: a

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Oblivion*. **Theatrical release:** April 19, 2013. **DVD release:** August 6. **Running time:** 124 minutes. **Director:** Joseph Kosinski. **Screenplay:** Karl Gajdusek and Michael Arndt. **MPAA rating:** PG-13. *San Francisco Chronicle* critic Mick LaSalle says, “After a slow start, this is the rare film that gets better as it goes along. The story, about two scientists working in a post-apocalyptic New York, deepens and builds an intense rooting interest. The action sequences are too much out of a video game, but this is intelligent science fiction—and it benefits enormously from Tom Cruise in the lead role.”



hidden, sheltered oasis of green, with healthy plants and clean, potable water. It is to this paradise, found in the midst of self-inflicted destruction, where Jack slips away to relax, rejuvenate, and be at peace. This is where he wants to remain the rest of his days, despite his careful “programming” and given mission. This dual message—of human as hapless destroyer *and* sensitive inhabitant—is a strong reminder that we are too often unconsciously at odds with the planet, while wholly supported by and dependent on it.

In a way, God also makes an entrance in *Oblivion*. At the film’s climax, as Jack displays the indomitable spirit of humankind by flying into the cold, dark heart of the alien pyramid-like structure on a quest to destroy it, he faces the alien itself. “I made you, Jack,” the alien voice explains. “I am your God.” In response, Jack detonates a bomb, sacrificing himself (and the hundreds of thousands of his clones) and immolating this “false god” in its own sanctuary.

The longer you allow your “ear to hear,” the more deafening the spiritual overtones to this scene become. Jack’s thousandfold sacrifice of himself saves the Earth from a false god that had used him to destructive ends. This alien “god” had created Jack and Victoria—analogs of Adam and Eve—but lacked a divine connection with them, and was incapable of originating life or of generating the kind of diversity found in authentic creation. Where Adam and Eve were created to be in careful stewardship over the Earth, Jack and Victoria were created to subjugate the planet, not to take care of the Earth, but to facilitate its exploitation. Theirs was not to glorify God by growing, learning, and co-creating their lives, but to serve mindlessly, unquestioningly, and to have a singular, insipid fate, clone after clone. This relationship with a “false god” could not last. Accordingly, the counterfeit deity was destroyed, bringing the freedom of true creativity back to humankind.

One could say much more about *Oblivion*. For example, I’ve only hinted at the film’s portrayal of the incalculable depth and power of the human spirit, illustrated by the inheritance of memory and resolve through genetic code alone. (Is humankind’s search for truth embedded into our very cells?) Suffice it to say that *Oblivion* is not necessarily solely entertainment for entertainment’s sake. Unless, that is, you choose to remain oblivious. **Z**

Ryan Harrison attends La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren where he started and led monthly Spiritual Cinema Circle gatherings for more than five years. He now works as the director of Resident Life and Wellness at Hillcrest, a Church of the Brethren retirement community, and is completing his doctor of psychology degree at the University of the Rockies.



Sometimes it’s hard to envision living somewhere other than where roots have grown, particularly when you’re facing your latter years, and the children are many states away.

In 2008, Bill and Helen Motter of Winnebago, Illinois moved to Pinecrest. As residents, Bill and Helen actively participated in many activities at the Village and they attended Middle Creek Presbyterian Church in Winnebago.

When Helen needed additional care at Pinecrest and later passed in 2010, Bill talked things over with his three children and decided to go to Texas to be near them.



But it just wasn’t home.

After 18 months, Bill called Pinecrest and said “I now realize what a wonderful place Pinecrest was to live. Can I move back to the Village?”



The answer, of course, was a resounding “yes!”

Bill returned to Pinecrest Village on May 1, 2013. Welcome back Bill. Your friends are glad you’re home.

Call Today For Our Cold-Weather Specials!

Pinecrest Community

The Grove Homes The Village Apartments The Manor Five-Star Care The Terrace Skilled Care

Phone 815-734-4103 414 S. Wesley Ave., Mt. Morris, Ill. 61054
Take a virtual tour at www.pinecrestcommunity.org

Caring. Committed. Christian. Since 1893.
A Legacy of Excellence. A Century of Trust.





Simply on the road

[Simple living is something Brethren have espoused for centuries. But putting belief into practice is not always easy—especially in today's complex society. A few suggestions for ways to simplify our lives, and perhaps be better stewards of the earth, certainly would come in handy. Living Simply offers tips for how to do just that. —Ed.]

Elizabethtown, Charlotte, Boulder City, Los Angeles. Like many of you, I have buckled my seat belt, rolled down the windows, and hit the open road quite a bit this summer. There has been work to do, vacation to have, and family to visit. The miles have flown by, just like the time, and it has been a blessing to see so many of you face to face.



MANDY GARCIA

But my love of travel notwithstanding, may I complain about airport/highway food for just one second?

When I was 6 and our family minivan trekked from the Midwest to Gramma's in Florida, there was no greater treat than chicken nuggets and orange soda. When I got older, a cold, chocolate, coffee beverage with whipped cream really hit the spot.

But now that spending lots of time in cars and airport terminals has become a more regular part of my schedule, my idea of a "treat" looks a lot more like a salad that's not in a plastic box.

Cost is another problem that comes with eating on the road. When French fries cost 50 cents and an apple costs \$3, it can be difficult to weigh your choices—especially when there are many mouths to feed.

I'm not an expert at alternative roadside dining, but in the name of simplicity, savings, and wellness, I've experimented with travel-friendly foods and am happy to pass along a few suggestions. In the meantime, happy trails! 🚗

Mandy Garcia is staff for donor communications for the Church of the Brethren.

Travel tips

1. While driving, stop at roadside farm stands whenever possible (especially if they have homemade apple butter!). I recently discovered that sun-warmed cherries taste incredible when washed down with a cup of fresh coffee.
2. Instant oatmeal packets require very little space in suitcases and make a quick, cheap, and nutritious breakfast almost anywhere (including hotels with in-room coffee makers).
3. Hardboiled eggs are a great way to add protein to a meal on the run, and are especially easy to eat if they are peeled ahead of time.
4. Slices of carrots, celery, cucumbers, and broccoli are tasty replacements for chips alongside a store-bought sandwich.
5. Apples, nuts, seeds, and dried fruits (pineapple, apricots, golden raisins, cranberries, bananas) are classic standbys that are full of fiber and require no refrigeration.
6. Whole-grain crackers travel well in a small box and will go perfectly with your apple butter.
7. Peanut butter and honey will also top your crackers well, and are good for stirring into oatmeal—just be sure to pack them in your checked luggage if you're flying.
8. Dry cereal and granola are filling and great for snacking, as well as breakfast.
9. It's always important to drink lots of water while traveling, so if you're flying, pack an empty bottle and fill it with water after you get through security.
10. Bonus tip from the travel experts in the Brethren Volunteer Service office: If you're traveling with a cooler, instead of using ice, freeze bottles of water or juice for an efficient way to keep food cold. When the liquid melts, drink it!

Experiencing God's love: A young adult conversation with Mark Yaconelli

Nineteen young adults gathered for casual conversation with Mark Yaconelli on Saturday evening at Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C. A circle of chairs filled the small conference room as people gathered to share with the writer, youth director, and community activist. Brief introductions were made before Mark told a story to set the theme for their time together.

A friend of his visited a classroom of kindergartners and asked them, "How many of you can draw?" All the children raised their hands. "How many of you can sing?" Again, all hands were raised. "How many of you can draw a picture of a pig in a spaceship, or sing a song about a turtle dancing on the trees?" After pondering only a moment, he faced a room full of creative, willing artists with their hands high in the air.

Later, that same friend visited a classroom full of university students and asked the same questions: Can you draw? Can you sing? But after each question, only one or two hands were raised, and those admissions came with qualifiers like, "I only do still life drawings," or "I only sing a certain style of music."

This led Mark's friend to ask one final question: "What happened to you in the last 13 years?!"

The point of the story was that we all start out confident in our abilities, and empowered to be creative. But not too many years later we enter a society that measures our worth only by appearance, achievements, and affluence. That pressure leads to fear and anxiety, which is the opposite of love.

To respond to this conclusion, Mark began two lists on a large piece of paper taped to the wall. One column was marked "Anxiety" and the other "Love." Under "Anxiety" were words like "results," "conforming," and "control," but parallel to those words were others in the "Love" category like "relationships," "creating," and "contemplation." Each young adult in the circle identified times in their lives that fit into each category, and Mark's conclusion was that each person has experienced moments of God's love, but we rarely slow down enough to savor them—to see how they might change us.

Mark invited the group to spread out, find a comfortable posture, and close their eyes. He then guided participants through a silent prayer exercise. It was a search through memories, a quest for sacred moments—moments when God's love was most clearly present. He asked what those moments looked like, what they felt like, how they smelled and felt to the touch.

After several minutes of meditation, the group split into several smaller ones and shared whatever they felt comfortable sharing from the experience. For some it was difficult, for others it was a relief. For all it required vulnerability.

Mark posed one final question, which was met with quiet reflection and pondering: How can we make sure that we continue to experience sacred moments of love in a society driven by anxiety?

Though the time was brief and the room was small and unattractive, the Holy Spirit made the minutes precious, and moved participants to beautiful places. Perhaps for some, this experience might even be their newest memory of experiencing God's loving presence.

Mandy Garcia is staff for donor communications for the Church of the Brethren.



Lists labeled "Anxiety" and "Love," filled with responses from young adults at Annual Conference.

The other side of the story

I read with interest the article in the May MESSENGER entitled: "What American Christians can learn from Palestinians" by John and Joyce Cassel. I know the article was well intentioned, but we must be reminded that there are two sides to any story. What is missing from the Cassels' account is Israel's side of the

story. Few are aware of the programs designed to fill minds with one side of the story and send listeners back to the US to be ambassadors for the Palestinian-Arab cause—that is, make Israel the bad guy and justify everything the Palestinian Arabs are doing as morally justified.

One can go to the scriptures and make a case that Israel has a biblical right and eternal promise (Jer. 31:31-37)

to the land under the covenant God made with Abraham, etc. But rather, in response to the claims of the article, let's consider the following:

The article does not address why there were Palestinian refugees. While the Jews accepted the 1947-48 partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, all the neighboring Arab states rejected the partition and invaded the Jews in order to annihilate Israel at birth.

Also missing is an explanation of how Israel's occupation of the West Bank came about. In 1967, Israel's neighbors sought to exterminate Israel, just as Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and most Palestinians and other Muslims in the Middle East today wish to do so now. It was only because of that war, won by Israel, that Israel came to "occupy" the West Bank of Jordan. Also, it would be best if we used the biblical terminology of "Samaria and Judea" and not the often politically charged terminology of "West Bank" used in the propaganda war against Israel.

Where is the mention of Palestinians honoring their numerous terrorists, or to the anti-Semitic propaganda that saturates Middle East media, or to the widespread Palestinian support for terrorism? According to a just-released Pew Forum poll of Muslims, 40 percent of Palestinians support suicide terror.

There is a failure in the article to acknowledge what happened in Gaza after the Israelis gave the whole of Gaza to the Palestinians: The Palestinians converted it into a terror-state that regularly launches rockets into Israel to kill as many Israelis as possible. Also, the article does not note, let alone condemn, the Muslim countries and organizations that seek to annihilate Israel, an existential threat that no other country or people in the world face.

If Israel is to be labeled "occupier," then on the same premise, we should be walking away from our homes and towns and surrendering such to the American Indians!

Roger Truax
Needmore, Pa.



Brethren
MUTUAL AID AGENCY

WHEN YOU WORK WITH BRETHREN MUTUAL AID AGENCY YOUR INSURANCE PREMIUM DOES DOUBLE-DUTY...

... it gives you top quality insurance protection at a competitive price and supports the work of the Church of the Brethren and its members.

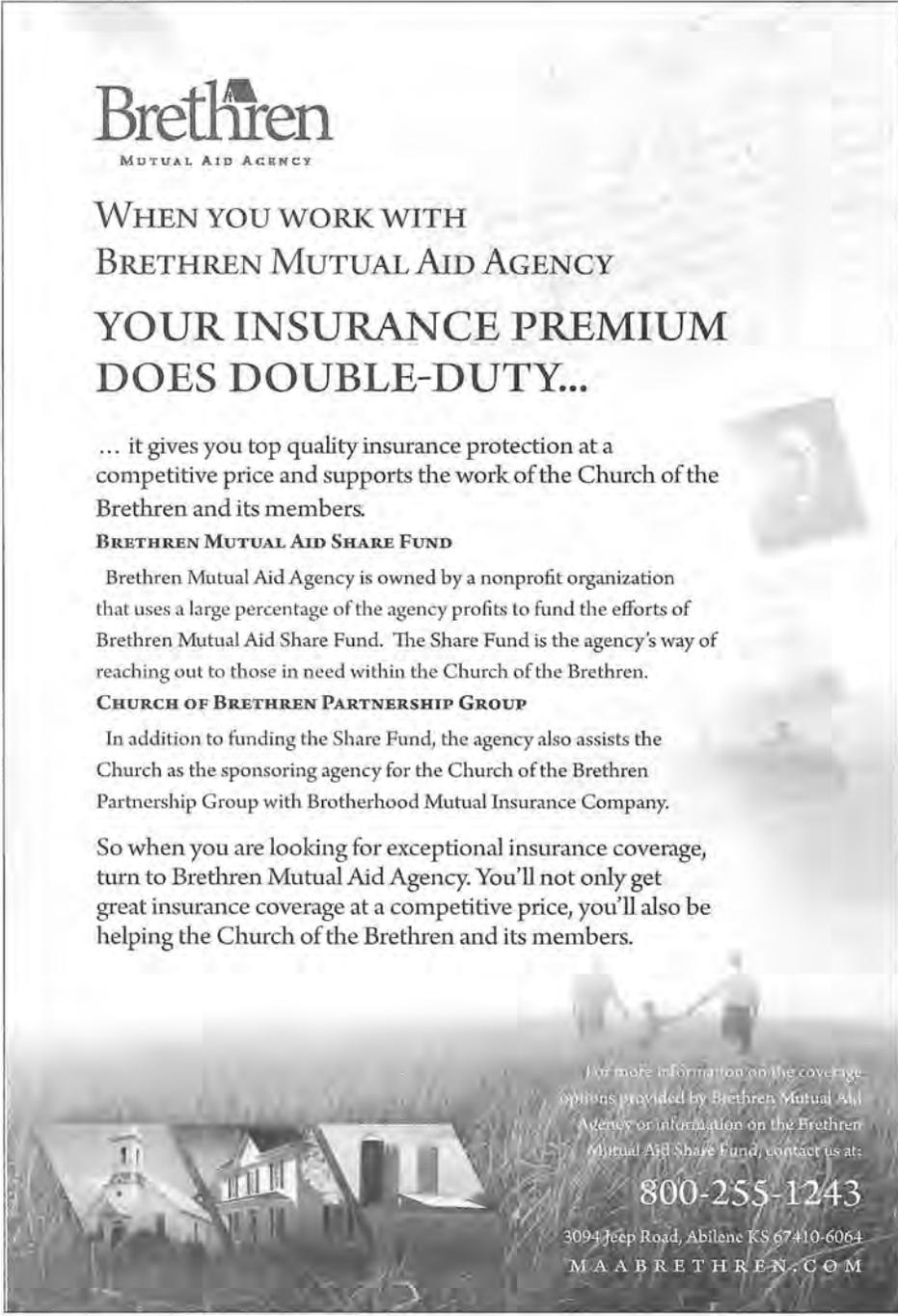
BRETHREN MUTUAL AID SHARE FUND

Brethren Mutual Aid Agency is owned by a nonprofit organization that uses a large percentage of the agency profits to fund the efforts of Brethren Mutual Aid Share Fund. The Share Fund is the agency's way of reaching out to those in need within the Church of the Brethren.

CHURCH OF BRETHREN PARTNERSHIP GROUP

In addition to funding the Share Fund, the agency also assists the Church as the sponsoring agency for the Church of the Brethren Partnership Group with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company.

So when you are looking for exceptional insurance coverage, turn to Brethren Mutual Aid Agency. You'll not only get great insurance coverage at a competitive price, you'll also be helping the Church of the Brethren and its members.



For more information on the coverage options provided by Brethren Mutual Aid Agency or information on the Brethren Mutual Aid Share Fund, contact us at:

800-255-1243

3094 Jeep Road, Abilene KS 67410-6064
M A B R E T H R E N . C O M

Thanks for the “thatching” article

I appreciated John A. Braun’s article, “Thatching helps reveal the truth,” in the July/August MESSENGER. I have placed it on the table by my recliner to read again as I have a daily meditation time—or perhaps a “thatching” time. I think of the beautiful rivers, valleys, and mountains in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia where I was born and grew to an adult. I have lived in four additional beautiful states where my husband did pastoral ministry.

Dick died 12 years ago. I live alone, and am now 79 years of age. On the table beside me also is a glass of water to drink with one small white pill which has some control over the recently discovered cancer in my body. I’ve been told that healthy eating, exercise, and meditation (and, of course, drinking lots of water) are important for a healthy body.

As I meditate, I think of others and world conditions. I pray for healing of mind, body, and soul for myself and others. And now also, as John Braun says, “I look to the rivers, valleys, and mountains around me and say thank you. I pray for the healing of the earth.”

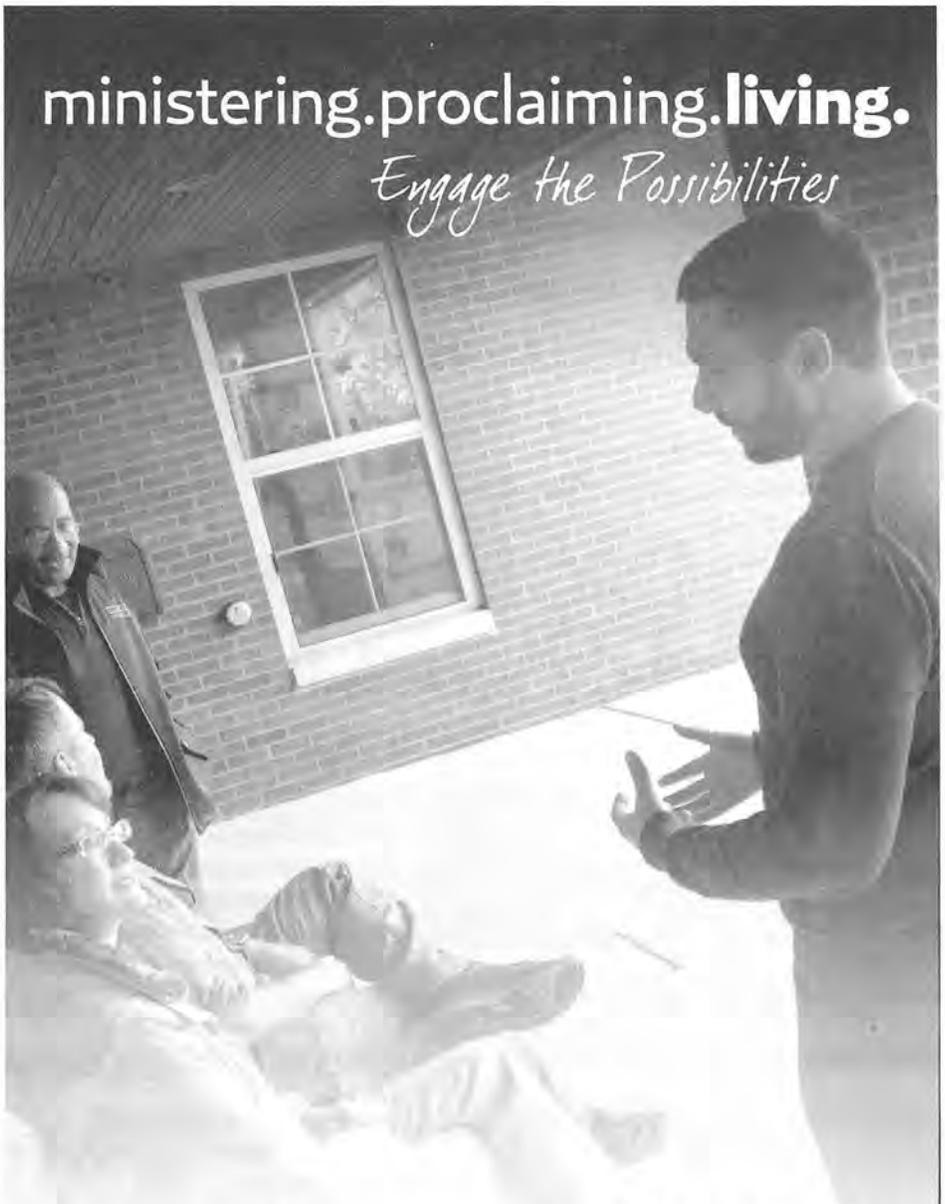
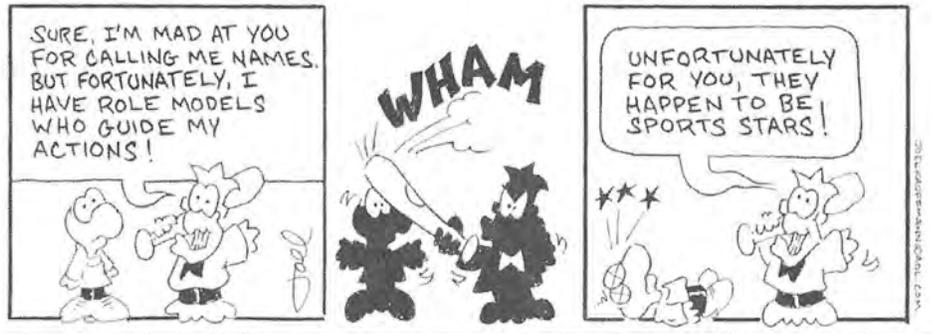
Margaret Renalds Witmer
Oxford, Ohio

Heeding the call from Conference?

On July 16, friends of Eric Ohena Lembembe found him dead in his home in Cameroon. Eric was a prominent gay-rights activist in Cameroon and had been tortured and killed just days after issuing a public statement about “anti-gay thugs” in the country and throughout Africa, a continent where homosexuality is increasingly being officially persecuted, often by violent means.

Why is this of any concern to the Brethren here in the US? Because as Christians we need to know that much of the funding going to African nations to lobby for increased penalties for homosexuality come from groups that call themselves Christian. These groups that

Pontius' Puddle



ministering.proclaiming.living.
Engage the Possibilities

Engage Visit Day:
November 1
www.bethanyseminary.edu/visit/engage

 **BETHANY**
Theological Seminary

Faith at the foundation

Congregations across the country are building and growing their mission and ministry, thanks to church mortgage loans from Everence.

Call (800) 348-7468 for more information.

Everence.com



appear to be moving past their “hate the sin, love the sinner” attitude and moving into open hatred and violence toward LGBT persons.

In a recent discussion I had with a brother during a Northern Indiana Church of the Brethren District Board meeting, it was obvious we were not of one mind on various issues. I tried to remain respectful as we talked, aware of my own strong feelings on this issue. I made the observation that his views and those of the Brethren Revival Fellowship, which he openly supports, didn't seem open to LGBT persons being part of the church, even if they are excluded from leadership roles, and even though Annual Conference called him to be in conversation with these people.

The response I received from him was chilling. He told me that some of his actions may seem hurtful or demeaning here on Earth, but are justified “in light

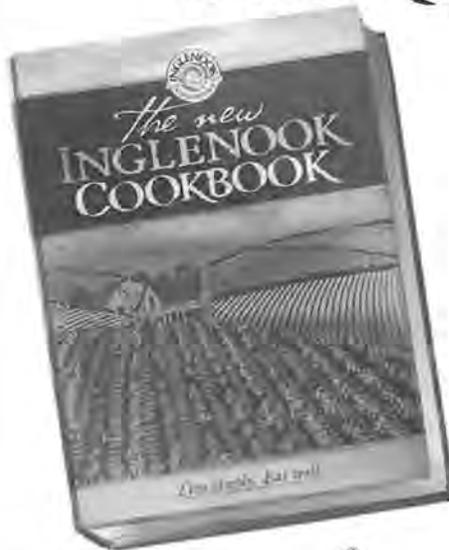
of salvation issues.” And, that if he was “wrong in his treatment of these sinners,” he can always “apologize in Heaven.” It was such an attitude that led to the death of Eric Ohena Lembembe.

As I have argued before in these pages, people do not hurt and kill people without being taught first to see those persons as the “other,” a human of lesser value—or not even fully human at all. When some keep calling people “sodomites” on blogs, or implying that their very being is sinful, we begin to dehumanize them. Saying that we can “apologize in Heaven” for these actions reduces the barriers to violence against these persons. When it is heard enough times to be believed, people are hurt and sometimes killed. As Christians, we know this is wrong.

The name calling and open disdain for these people is hurtful, sometimes to the point of death, and it needs to stop. Passively or actively looking the other way while so-called brothers and sisters in Christ support the groups who demean or hurt LGBT people here and abroad sure feels wrong to me. Let us learn to love our neighbor.

Mark Shafer
Niles, Mich.

The new INGLENOOK COOKBOOK



Live simply. Eat well.

Since 1901, *The Inglebrook Cookbook* has been bringing generations together. *The New Inglebrook Cookbook* continues that tradition by assembling over 350 recipes from today's kitchens in a cookbook that speaks to the values we share.

Place your order and
continue the tradition.

Brethren Press

Brethren Press
1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120
fax: 800-667-8188 phone: 800-441-3712
www.inglenookcookbook.org

CLASSIFIEDS

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

The Palmyra PA Church of the Brethren commissioned an anthem to honor the retirement of Senior Pastor Wallace (Wally) Landes. The anthem, “We Believe,” was composed by well-known composers Don Besig and Nancy Price. With a meaningful Brethren text and flowing melodic line, the anthem can be ordered from your local music store or on-line at www.halleonard.com. For the search, type in 35028039,

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

New Members

Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.: Robert Loughlin, Christine Loughlin, Kaley Loughlin, Kiera Loughlin, Brandon Loughlin, Susan Poole

Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.: Chevy Boggs, Patricia Rice, Amelia Claire Smith, Lucas Kinman, Michael Tucker, Kathie Tucker

Camp Creek, Etna Green, Ind.: Nicholas Clark, Erica Mifflin, Teresa Mifflin, Vanessa Mifflin, Abby Slabaugh, Clara Thompson, Raymond Thompson, William Thompson

Creekside, Elkhart, Ind.: Carver DeWitt Gall, Christopher Schmucker, Elizabeth Schmucker, Mechiel Dues, Ray Bode, Deb Bode, Alysia Marcin, Sara Houser

Dundalk, Md.: Nikki Balding, Alia Balding, Jada Balding, Gloria Banks, Joann Gordy, Delores Johnson, Connie Byrd, Dayia Lynn, Jeanne Wilson, Jeremy Smith, Kathy Mooney

East Cocalico, Stevens, Pa.: Susan Franck, Louis Casanova, III, Thresia Casanova

Elizabethtown, Pa.: Jay Gible, Judith Gible, Nathaniel DeGoede, Ryan Dennehy, Olivia Hershey, Melissa Martin, Anjelica Mora, Abby Thomas

Ephrata, Pa.: Dave Weiss, Dawn Weiss, Lisa Hornberger, Duane Weiler, Steve Moore, Lori Lambert, Coni Gerhart, Linda Kulp

Fairview, Mount Clinton, Harrisonburg, Va.: James Patterson, Carol Patterson

Gettysburg, Pa.: Steve Ryon, Michelle Ryon, Emilee Ryon, Hanna Ryon, Katie Hollabaugh

Glendale, Calif.: Scott Valles, David Semerad, Coralie Semerad, Courtney Semerad, Kathy Aker

Green Tree, Oaks, Pa.: Dave Coffman, Andy Simon, Marissa Yeager

Hagerstown, Md.: Allen Place

Hartville, Ohio: Karen Kaschner, Donald Locke, Marian Locke

Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Titus Heisey

Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.: Brendon Duffy, Kelly Myer

Henry Fork, Rocky Mount, Va.: Nancy Hall, Hunter Shively, Pam Thornhill, Tami Jo Thornhill, Ryan Hodges, Bayleigh Chitwood, Calie Miller, Harley Ledbetter

HIS Way, Mills River, N.C.: Daniela Nunez, Marcella Daniel, Francis Cuadros

Lancaster, Pa.: Phyllis Spencer

Ligonier, Pa.: Dennis Dawson, Lorene Dawson

Lititz, Pa.: Bernice Malizia, Chris Spatz, Talia Bertrando, Jim Adams, Carolyn Adams, Sarah Blanck, Clair Martin, Jeff Keller, Adriana Keller, Diane Martin, Don Huber, Pauline Huber, Nancy Morgan, Scott Christ, David Myers, Janet Myers, Abigail Myers

Live Oak, Calif.: Bill Easterwood

Manassas, Va.: Eric Anderson, Megan Anderson, Marc Barb, Grace Carter, Jeff Crawford, Leah Eberly, Deborah Eller, Tina Fisher, Jonna Garvin, Kelly Grieco, Ava Kimble, Chris Kronzer, Kelly Kronzer, Katelyn Kronzer, Lauren Kronzer, Jessica Kronzer, Jim Lunsford, Susie Lunsford, Carl Putman, Todd Robbins, Janet Robbins, Elizabeth Stauffer, Addison Wallace

Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.: Charles Beckom, Lucille Menier, Ricky Conner, Mikey Conner, Denis Keeton, Melissa Keeton, Kathy Eaton

McPherson, Kan.: Devin Clark, Avery Goering, Berkeley Jackson, Sage Koelling, Elaina McMillan, Ivanna Moyer

Meadow Branch, Westminster, Md.: Deborah Ann Smith, Kacey Hudgins

Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa.: Britni Akers, Josh Akers, Ron Bolt, Rick Malloy, Ashley Malloy, Walter Cunningham, IV, Alexis Davis, Sharon Davis

Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Amanda Hamilton

Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Dawn Oberholtzer, Jay Oberholtzer

Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.: Jacob Alderman, Elizabeth Lambert, Wesley Lambert, Colton Landes, Lauren Miller, Andrew Morgan, Sarah Morris

Modesto, Calif.: Josh Gilstrap-Katen

Mountville, Pa.: Kevin Wolford, Isabelle Rudisill

Myerstown, Pa.: Stephanie Ebling, Cate Liskey, Duey Peiffer, Grace Ziegler

Oakton, Vienna, Va.: Chandler Comer, Leah Landes, Matt Landes, Carolyn Strong, Jeff Strong

Pleasant View, Elida, Ohio: Gloria Byerly

Roaring Spring, Pa.: Peter Surin, Dylon Bianconi, Zane Croft, Zeth Croft, Tanner Eckenrode, Ashley Josapak, Mattie May, Henry McCulloch, Joseph McCulloch, Madeline Metzler, Jacey Myers, Alexis Petre, Jacob Reilly, Alexis Wagner, Rachel Wagner, Shayla Smith

Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Bill Brady, Brooks Eisenbise

University Baptist & Brethren, State College, Pa.: Rodrigo Cardenas, Karen Miller, Amy McKinney

West York, York, Pa.: Landon Eshbach, Madison McDowell, Mariah Schmittel, Joann Wayne

Wyomissing, Pa.: Brian Fehr, Kim Fehr, Fawn Seifrit, Lee Seifrit

Wedding Anniversaries

Aeschbacher, Kenneth and Mary, San Diego, Calif., 50

Baer, Fred and Myrna, Friedens, Pa., 50

Balmer, Vernon and Ruth Ann, Myerstown, Pa., 50

Bollinger, Glenn and Edna, Ephrata, Pa., 50

Bomberger, Claude and Doris, Harrisburg, Pa., 60

Bowser, Harold and Betty, Everett, Pa., 60

Boyce, Robert and Miriam, Palmyra, Pa., 60

Brewer, Ed and Donna, Maugansville, Md., 50

Brookins, Richard and Julia, Goshen, Ind., 50

Bucher, Luke and Naomi, Myerstown, Pa., 55

Bucher, Wilbur and Annette, Lancaster, Pa., 65

Buckwalter, Edgar and Elizabeth, Ephrata, Pa., 70

Burger, Richard and Ann, Moravia, Iowa, 70

Champlin, Bob and Elizabeth, Canton, Ill., 60

Coppess, Lowell and Doris, Bradford, Ohio, 50

Cox, Stanford and Grace, Lancaster, Pa., 60

Dull, Charles and Janie, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 50

Frizzell, Kenneth and Rosalee, Westminster, Md., 50

Fuller, Kenneth and Linda, Springfield, Ohio, 50

Graham, Galen and Burnetta, Lancaster, Pa., 65

Guyer, Donald and Jacqueline, Independence, Mo., 55

Hager, Sam and Shirley, Lima, Ohio, 55

Heien, Carl and Sharon, Centerville, Iowa, 50

Herrington, Dick and Sue, Perrysburg, Ohio, 50

Hiler, Richard and Judith, Hummelstown, Pa., 50

Huse, Horace and JoAnn, Toledo, Ohio, 60

Kipp, Wilbur and Lois, Haxtun, Colo., 65

Kramer, Dick and Carol, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Long, Melvin and Linda, Westminster, Md., 55

Markley, Leland and Deana, Goshen, Ind., 65

Marks, Jim and Joyce, Lancaster, Pa., 55

McClain, Bernard and Virginia, New Market, Md., 65

Melhorn, J. Jack and Mary, Emporia, Kan., 65

Miller, Myron and Sandy, Elkhart, Ind., 50

Nicodemus, Ron and Jan, Osceola, Ind., 50

Renner, Edward and Bonnie, Myersville, Md., 50

Sadd, Hudson and Bonnie, Manheim, Pa., 55

Saufley, Al and Phyllis, McGeheysville, Va., 55

Schall, Robert and Lois, Denton, Md., 50

Schwalm, Dean and Anna, Syracuse, Ind., 60

Sheets, Nelson and Martha, McGeheysville, Va., 55

Shoup, Ron and Marlene, Polk, Ohio, 50

Simmons, Everett and Sondra, Garden City, Kan., 55

Skinner, Philip and Mariann, Hartville, Ohio, 50

Smith, Don and Norma, Harleysville, Pa., 65

Sollenberger, Carmon and Thessa, Sun City Center, Fla., 60

Stauffer, J. Richard and Myra, Lancaster, Pa., 65

Stein, Bob and Betty, Uniontown, Pa., 65

Stern, Roy and Phyllis, Goshen, Ind., 55

Summy, Glenn and Martha, Ephrata, Pa., 50

Tucker, Jim and Rachel, Nova, Ohio, 65

Vaughn, Sam and Jean, Shippensburg, Pa., 65

White, Curt and Evie, Franklin Grove, Ill., 60

Wickert, Don and Esther, La Verne, Calif., 65

Deaths

Aldridge, Marie Cripe, 104, Cerro Gordo, Ill., June 22

Billet, Donald Eugene, 84, Quarryville, Pa., Feb. 20

Bright, Dorothy E., 87, Ashland, Ohio, June 5

Brown, Grace Blickenstaff, 96, Astoria, Ill., Jan. 3

Brown, Ronald David, 67, Union Bridge, Md., April 23

Bryant, Kenneth M., 96, Goshen, Ind., July 3, 2012

Burkholder, Robert Osborne, 85, New Market, Va., July 10

Cornwell, Malissa Batschelet, 86, Manassas, Va., May 2

Coulter, Loren Ray, 85, Garden City, Kan., May 29

Crouse, Ruth J., 100, Denton, Md., Oct. 5

Daum, Margaret Noah, 76, Mount Lebanon, Pa., June 27

Delauter, Catherine L., 88, Hagerstown, Md., May 14

Dick, Betty J., 90, Big Cove Tannery, Pa., April 5

Dorwart, John S., IV, 86, Harrisburg, Pa., June 25

Duffey, David F., 75, Hagerstown, Md., June 15

Fleming, Walter J., 93, Monrovia, Md., March 12

Fletcher, John, 38, Harpers Ferry, W.Va., March 9

Frei, George F., 88, Myerstown, Pa., Sept. 11, 2012

Gardner, Norval G., 96, Arcadia, Calif., April 16

Getz, Benjamin L., 82, Broadway, Va., March 7

Gibson, Robert Desmond, 90, Lincoln, Neb., June 15

Words to live by

They seemed especially fitting, right from the start—the words on the vertical green banners hanging here and there in the Annual Conference arena and exhibit hall. Listed one after another, from top to bottom, they read: “refresh, rejuvenate, restore, recover, replenish, repeat, recycle.” At the bottom, just above the convention center bins, was the encouragement to “Please recycle here.”

It was Sunday morning when a friend pointed them out to me. Conference had begun just the night before, but already



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER EDITOR

it was apparent that, for us Brethren anyway, there was something in those words that spoke about more than just practicing good stewardship. The tenor of this Conference felt vastly different from Grand Rapids two years ago, where the rancor was palpable and tensions ran high. But it also felt different even from St. Louis last year where, although we were better behaved, there was the sense that we were just putting on polite faces, while below the surface we still were edgy and uneasy.

This year, in Charlotte, the goodwill felt genuine. What made the difference? For one thing, the business items seemed far less likely to engender hostile confrontation than in years past. Delegates were assigned seats at round tables,

tension among us in recent years have suddenly melted away. Deep wounds remain. But I felt hopeful that we'd turned a corner and agreed to deal with one another in a more civil manner. One brother sporting a rainbow scarf had hoped to arrange a visit with some of our more conservative Brethren and wash their feet. Logistics prevented it from occurring this time, but he plans to have his basin and towel at the ready next year in Columbus.

“I had nearly lost hope for the Church of the Brethren,” said Karen Carter, who has had a long history with the church in a variety of leadership roles. “But now, in the presence of these round tables, after this Conference, I again feel hopeful for us.”

She wasn't alone. Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren pastor Bob Kettering, standing at a microphone on the Conference floor, said, “I think this Conference has been very healing, from start to finish.”

Even before Conference began there were encouraging signs. On their way to Charlotte, the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren Chancel Choir spent a week singing in churches in Pennsylvania and Virginia and were warmly received even by congregations where theological differences, in another year, might have created tension. Not this time.

At the closing service Wednesday morning, Conference-goers lifted their voices in singing: “Alleluia, the great storm is over. Lift up your wings and fly.”

There they were, all around us: those banners bearing words seemingly directed right at us. Coincidence? A wink and a nod from God? Who knows? But I'm hopeful that they signal a *turn toward kindness* ...

as they had been last year, which again helped us see one another more as brothers and sisters and less as opponents. And this year, the first full day of Conference was devoted to spiritual enrichment—the kind of feel-good stuff most of us hope for when we gather every year.

I'm sure those things helped. But I think it was more than these external factors alone. As I walked the floors I saw less strain in people's faces. We were less wary, more ready to smile and to reach out. (And it wasn't just because of the free ice cream from Mission and Ministry Board members and staff—though it didn't hurt!) We seemed refreshed, rejuvenated, restored, and recovered.

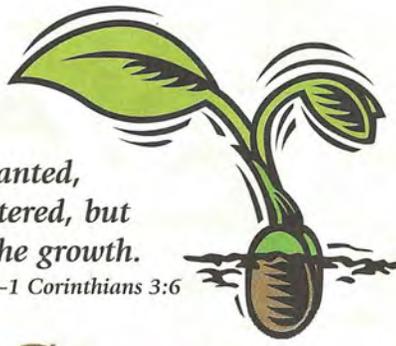
I don't mean to suggest that the issues that created such

I don't know if the storm is completely over. Given the vast differences in our body, I doubt it ever will be. But it does appear to have diminished from a hurricane to at least a tropical storm and, if this Conference is any indication, we seem better able to cope with it.

“Raise up thy banners high in this hour,” reads a line from “Move in Our Midst,” the hymn whose title served as the Conference theme. There they were, all around us: those banners bearing words seemingly directed right at us. Coincidence? A wink and a nod from God? Who knows? But I'm hopeful that they signal a turn toward kindness, and that we, in the Church of the Brethren, will act on those words as we continue down this path toward restoration and wholeness. *RM*

COMING IN OCTOBER: Implications for leadership in the church.

*I (Paul) planted,
Apollos watered, but
God gave the growth.*
—1 Corinthians 3:6



Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully Toward an Intercultural Future

May 15-17, 2014

Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Indiana

This vibrant gathering focused on church planting is rooted in worship and prayer while providing practical training, nurturing conversation, and stimulating idea-sharing. The entire conference will work toward an intercultural future, including a unique training track offered in Spanish.

Keynote Leadership



Efrem Smith

Efrem Smith is an internationally recognized leader who uses motivational speaking and preaching to equip people for a life of transformation. He consults with churches on issues of multi-ethnicity, leadership, and community development.

He served as Founding Pastor of The Sanctuary Covenant Church and currently is the Superintendent of the Pacific Southwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Efrem is an author of three books. He is married with two daughters.



Alejandro Mandes

Dr. Mandes is director of Hispanic Ministries for the Evangelical Free Church of America. He serves as a catalyst for multiplying healthy Hispanic churches and has a special commitment to love, train and send immigrant leaders.

Alex has planted three churches and writes and speaks regularly about the need to recalibrate the American church's vision to see, serve and send the immigrants among us. Alejandro is married and has five daughters.



Opening worship preacher

Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference moderator for 2014, will preach at our opening worship service.

Online registration begins December 16

Fees: Early bird through March 17 - \$179.00 Regular after March 17 - \$229.00 Bethany or Academy student - \$129.00

www.brethren.org/churchplanting
churchplanting@brethren.org



Church of the Brethren Planting Network

Sponsored by the Church of the Brethren through the office of
Congregational Life Ministries and the New Church Development Advisory Committee.



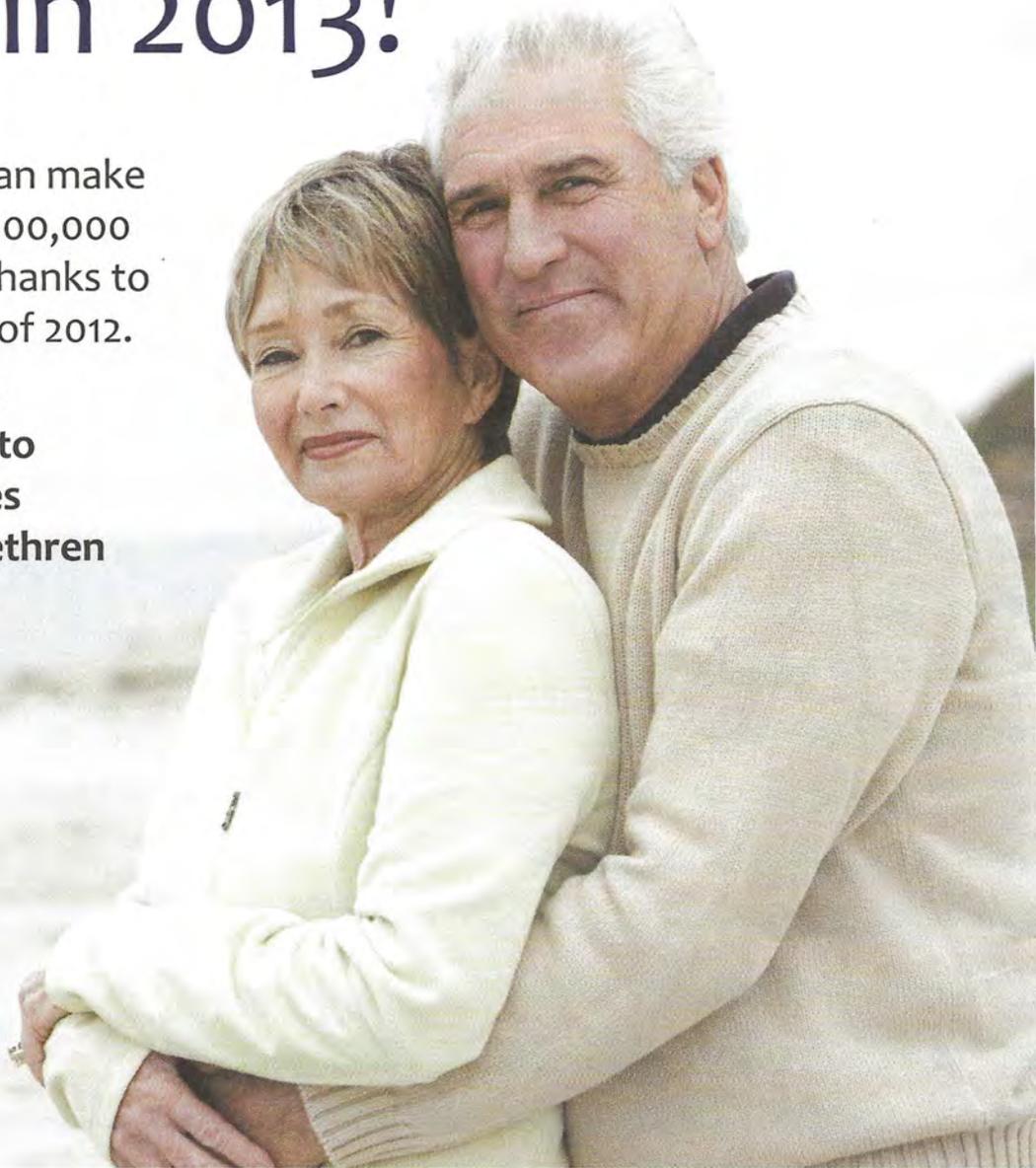
Church of the Brethren

save taxes in 2013!

For a limited time, you can make a tax-free gift of up to \$100,000 from your IRA account thanks to The Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012.

This new law provides a wonderful opportunity to support all the ministries of the Church of the Brethren while avoiding Federal income taxes.

CALL NOW!
(800) 323-8039 ext. 354



Donors benefitting most from an IRA gift are those who either wish to make a charitable gift but do not itemize their deductions, are making gifts in excess of the amount deductible, or do not need the income from required minimum distributions (RMDs) and want to avoid being unnecessarily taxed on RMD income.

Your IRA gift can make a real difference in peoples' lives across the nation and around the world through the ministries of the Church of the Brethren.

Act now before this opportunity ends!

Contact: **John Hipps**
Director of Donor Relations for the Church of the Brethren
email: jhipps@brethren.org
phone: (800) 323-8039 ext. 354



Church of the Brethren

To qualify for tax-free treatment, gifts to the Church of the Brethren must be made by a donor at least 70 ½ years of age and occur by direct transfer from the IRA administrator to the Church no later than December 31, 2013.

Please consult your tax advisor about your specific situation.