

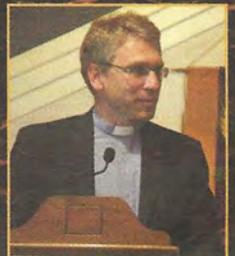
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

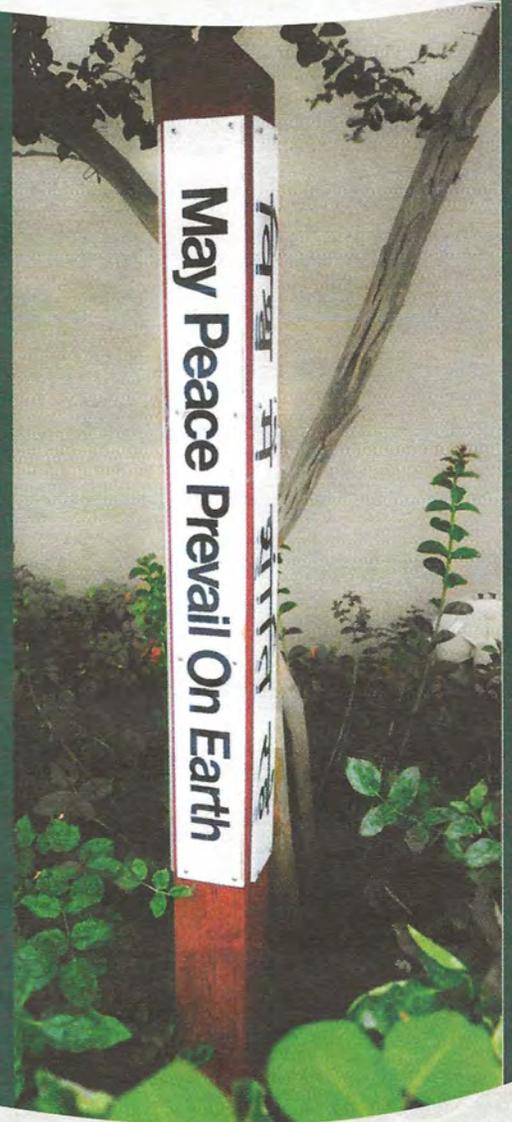
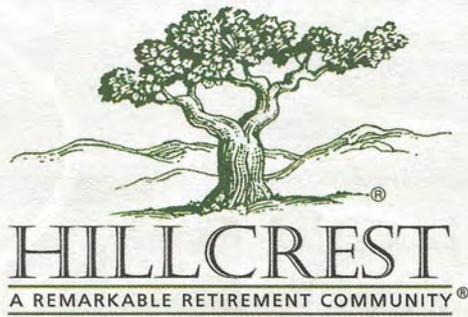
OCTOBER 2013 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

On course or adrift?

Ron Keener asks the question



Inside: INTERVIEW WITH
OLAV FYKSE TVEIT, WCC
GENERAL SECRETARY 12



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



LeadingAge
formerly aasha

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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



October 2013 VOL.162 NO. 8 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

8 Are Brethren on a course to 'mission drift'?

Are Brethren churches moving away from their moorings—their core values? And, if so, who is most responsible for the shift? Congregations? The denomination? Pastors and staff? Former *Church Executive* magazine editor Ron Keener's answer may surprise you.

12 Being church in the world—a conversation with WCC leaders

Olav Fykse Tveit and Natasha Klukach from the World Council of Churches visited the Church of the Brethren General Offices, where they discussed key issues in the church leading up to next month's 10th Assembly.

14 Making their 'meetinghouse' useful today

Today's churches look quite different from the meetinghouses in which early Brethren gathered for worship. "The meetinghouses were plain but practical," says Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren pastor Bob Kettering. "I believe the Brethren had the right idea in calling their structures meetinghouses, which functioned as hospitality centers." Find out how one church is applying a meetinghouse approach in today's world.

18 Unlikely conversations

Unexpected encounters and unlikely conversations can often lead to profound insights and rich relationships, if only we remain open to the nudging of God's Spirit.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



departments

2 FROM THE PUBLISHER	20 NEWS	27 LETTERS
3 IN TOUCH	24 MEDIA REVIEW	30 TURNING POINTS
6 REFLECTIONS	25 YOUTH LIFE	32 EDITORIAL
7 THE BUZZ	26 LIVING SIMPLY	

Remember the good old days when it was normal to spend more than 90 percent of your energy producing heat instead of light? Back then replacing light bulbs was a simple matter. You checked the wattage and then you went to the store.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

Then it got interesting, as enlightened (get it?) people switched to energy-saving CFLs. And now you also have to consider halogen and LED bulbs. It's even necessary to have a grasp of lumens and Kelvin numbers.

This puts a new spin on letting your light shine, and we might ask how we can do that better too. How can we become cool, long-lasting LEDs? How can we put most of our energy into light?

While we ponder that instruction from Jesus (adapted loosely from Matthew 5), here's a news bulletin: The Brethren have made the big time. That is, we have made it into online lists of religious light bulb jokes. Here we are, along with some of the company we're keeping:

Q: How many Calvinists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. God has predestined when the lights will be on.

Q: How many Episcopalians does it take to change a light bulb?

A: What? Change the light bulb? My grandmother donated that light bulb!

Q: How many charismatics does it take to change a light bulb?

A: One, since his hands are in the air anyway.

Q: How many Quakers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Ten to sit around in a circle until one feels the inner light.

Q: How many campfire worship leaders does it take to change a light bulb?

A: One. But soon all those around can warm up to its glowing.

Q: How many Atheists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. Atheists don't believe in light bulbs.

Q: How many independent Baptists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one. Any more than that would be considered ecumenical.

Q: How many Amish does it take to change a light bulb?

A: What's a light bulb?

Q: How many Brethren does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Change!???

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 © October 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)

Congregation Close-Up

'Field of Food' at Brethren Village helps families in Nicaragua

On Aug. 1, Zayda Reyes, from Matagalpa, Nicaragua, visited Brethren Village in Lancaster, Pa., to see the nation's only "Field of Food" sponsored by a retirement community. Reyes, a coordinator of food projects in rural Nicaragua, shared about the work she is doing with poor farmers in her home country. Her work has helped more than 1,000 farmers there to purchase land, improve their farming techniques, and learn more about soil and water conservation. This work has allowed these farmers to grow more food, and has reduced child malnutrition in the area.



Since 2008, Brethren Village, a Church of the Brethren-related retirement community, has been supporting the work in Nicaragua through Foods Resource Bank. Each year land on Brethren Village's property is set aside for a crop of corn or soybeans. Seven acres of beans were grown on the field last summer. This year, it's corn. At harvest time the crop is sold, and the proceeds go to support poor, rural families so that they can grow their own food. Over the past five years,

Courtesy of Dana Statler



Foods Resource Bank field coordinator Alex Morse, Nicaraguan food project coordinator Zayda Reyes, and Brethren Village associate pastor Dana Statler visit the "field of food" at the Pennsylvania retirement community.

Brethren Village has been able to donate more than \$18,000 and has helped nearly 400 families grow enough food to escape the pain of hunger and poverty.

"It's exciting to know you're making a difference beyond the community," said Dana Statler, associate pastor at Brethren Village. "We do work in the community, but we ask ourselves what in the world are we doing. And it's really exciting to hear the impact our project is having in Nicaragua."

by the numbers

280,010

Dollar amount Brethren Disaster Ministries was recently awarded from the American Red Cross to rebuild homes in response to Hurricane Sandy

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.

Manheim Project improves community

Brethren wearing blue “Manheim Project” T-shirts were seen throughout Manheim borough in Pennsylvania from July 29 to Aug 2.

Nearly 120 volunteers, ages 7 to 70, from Manheim’s White Oak Church (Pa.) of the Brethren could be found painting the gazebo in Market Square, replacing wooden porches, painting the exterior of residents’ homes or picking up litter and debris in parks or along streets.

“Our objective was to give honor and glory to God by doing acts of kindness and sharing our time and skills with people,” said Nate Minnich,

one of the coordinators of the outreach program. “We want to be a positive impact on the community—it’s a mission trip to our own backyard.

As Anna Cater helped paint the gazebo in Manheim’s Market Square on Aug. 1, she reflected on the experience.

“It’s really cool to be able to build relationships with people and to share God’s love with them,” said Cater, one of White Oak’s volunteers.

Both Betty Poremba’s and Kathi Gochenauer’s homes received some assistance from the volunteers.

Poremba’s Hazel Street home now sports a renovated kitchen

thanks to volunteers who hung new cabinets and installed a sink and countertops. Drywall in an adjoining hallway also was replaced. She explained that a water issue had led to flooding in the home.

“It’s been like that for two years,” Poremba said. “We even had the drywall, but didn’t have the time to do the project. The Manheim Project volunteers are doing a fantastic job. I’ve been smiling all week.”

Storm windows also were installed on the home, which will help make it more energy efficient and reduce heating bills this winter, she said.

“If they do this again next year, I’d like to volunteer, too. I’d like to give back and help someone else,” she said.

The Manheim Project was facilitated by Love INC of Lancaster County. Kim Wittel, Love INC’s executive director, said that the outreach projects are part of

Love INC’s Compassion Project, which serves as a resource to aid local churches in acts of compassion during a mission trip to their own community.

“It’s a direct outgrowth of our mission, which is to connect churches with the needs of their neighbors so that they can transform lives and communities in the name of Christ,” Wittel explained.

Information about the project was distributed to residents predominantly in the southwest area of the borough. Residents interested in receiving assistance from Manheim Project volunteers were directed to contact Love INC, where information including the specific needs of the resident was gathered.

That information was then forwarded to Manheim Project coordinators, who helped match the skills of volunteers to the tasks that were to be completed at the nearly 20 properties.

“We asked our volunteers to complete a form and indicate what their various skills are,” Minnich said. “The great thing about this project is that everyone can contribute in some way.”

Some people prepared meals for the group of volunteers, while others set up for the meal or cleaned up afterward. Some people picked up supplies and delivered them to the various sites, while others served on work teams that painted, did carpentry work or cleaned up debris.

The day began with a breakfast. Then volunteers on the work teams packed their lunches, which were placed in a large cooler and delivered to the day’s work site. At the end of the day, volunteers again met at the Manheim Farm Show complex to share a supper.

—By Rachele Schenk. Reprinted with permission from the *Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era*.

Courtesy Intelligencer Journal/New Era, Lancaster, Pa.



A group of Manheim Project volunteers paint and clean.

Courtesy Intelligencer Journal/New Era, Lancaster, Pa.





A group of pastors carries a Church of the Brethren sign at the 1963 March on Washington: (from left) Edward K. Ziegler, Glenn E. Kinsel, Robert G. Mock, and Philip E. Norris. They are shown in conversation with American Baptist executive Edward Tuller.



Brethren recall hearing King's 'Dream' speech

Five members of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren who attended the 1963 March on Washington were among the six Elgin, Ill., residents interviewed by the *Courier News* (affiliated with the *Chicago Sun Times*). The group told about the adventure of making their way to the march and being on the Mall in Washington that Aug. 28. Those interviewed include Margaret Spivey of Elgin's Second Baptist Church who at the time was a student in Chicago working on urban renewal; Willard "Duly" Dulabaum, at the time associate pastor at a Church of the Brethren congregation in North Manchester, Ind., who took 44 church members to the march; Jay Gible, who was on the same bus as Dulabaum; Nancy and Lamar Gible who traveled by car from Maryland where Lamar was a pastor; and Howard Royer who attended as news director for the Church of the Brethren magazine *Gospel Messenger*. Find the article "Witnesses to History: Elginites Recall Their Trip to Hear MLK's 'Dream' Speech" online at <http://couriernews.suntimes.com/22045441-417/witnesses-to-history-elginites-recall-their-trip-to-hear-mlks-dream-speech.html>.

Also in the news for her participation in the March on Washington was Manchester University president Jo Young Switzer. Her memories of the experience 50 years ago, when she was a high school sophomore, were published by the Fort Wayne (Ind.) *Journal Gazette* under the title: "March on Washington 'day that shaped my life.'" Switzer remembered, "It was a day I will never forget, a day that reignited my hopes for all people to be treated with respect . . . It was a day that shaped my life. King's words ring in my ears to this day." Read the full text of Young's reflection at <http://journalgazette.net/article/20130828/EDIT05/308289985>.

LANDMARKS and laurels

➔ **Training in Ministry (TRIM)** graduates were honored at the 2013 Bethany Theological Seminary Annual Conference Luncheon: Rhonda Dorn (Northern Indiana District), Mary Etta Reinhart (Atlantic Northeast), Diane Mason (Northern Plains), Marilyn Koehler (Northern Plains), and Traci Rabenstein (Southern Pennsylvania). TRIM is a program of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. For more go to www.bethanyseminary.edu/academy.

➔ **The final group of pastors** in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence-Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership program of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership completed their two-year training on June 21: Mike Martin, David Hendricks, Martin Hutchison, Roland Johnson, Mary Fleming, Robin Wentworth Meyer, and Marty Doss. This completes the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The Sustaining Ministerial Excellence Advanced Seminar will begin in early 2014, funded by Wieand grants from the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Seminary.

➔ **Final accounting is complete** for the 2013 Shenandoah District Disaster Ministries Auction: \$211,699.46. The district newsletter reported that "our 21-year total is now \$3,692,379.60. Thanks to everyone who made this year's event such a success. Disaster response is one of our district's strongest ministries, and the proceeds from the auction support that outreach."

➔ **Bridgewater (Va.) College is one of the best colleges and universities in the Southeast**, according to the Princeton Review. In the profile on Bridgewater at PrincetonReview.com, the college is described as one concerned with 'personally developing students in every aspect of life and making each individual physically, academically, socially, and mentally fit for the real world.'

The violence of voting

I am not a fan of Winston Churchill. I realize he had notable qualities. But his values, beliefs, and behaviors are not my own.

Still, I admit that among his many achievements is a reputation for turning a quotable phrase. One of his most famous is that “democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.”

As a man of violence, empire, and war he well understood the irony of his words. He knew first-hand that voting and majority rule were substitutes for and alternatives to decision-making by force of arms.

As such, these democratic practices represent a momentous advance in the civilizing of our politics. The contrast between civil war and democracy makes even the nastiest of political campaigns seem a lot more tolerable. Yet politics is a dirty word, and deservedly so.



Voting is still violence. It is better than going into the streets with knives and clubs, but it remains—at least as we practice it today—a form of social and psychological violence where one group of people imposes its will on everyone else. In elections for office, there are winners and losers. Losing hurts. It feels

like rejection, humiliation, and a public devaluation—if not invalidation—of everything you are and have to offer.

Likewise in referendums on issues, there are winning and

40 years later, 50.1 percent vote another way, does this mean God changed his mind? So far as we know, the New Testament church did not vote.

We cannot escape the necessity of making decisions about how we follow him—simply, peacefully, together. But we should never mistake these decisions as anything more than our best efforts to embrace the challenges of our times.

Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one, even as he and the Father are one. He did this so that the world might know that the Father had sent him. Unity is not only a mark of discipleship: more importantly it is a validation of the divine mission and call of Jesus himself.

As a newcomer to the Brethren faith, the thing that struck me most was our deep heritage of forbearance and humility—love over dogma, community over creed, discipleship over all.

“No force in religion” is the seminal dictum of this humility. We seek the mind of Jesus together. We do not claim to know it. This is our distinctive calling and gift.

If we lose this, what do we have left to offer our neighbors? There are plenty of churches out there who know the truth, and are eager to tell it to you. Jesus does not need another church like that. If that is what we want to be, perhaps we are ready as rock salt to be scattered on icy sidewalks and roads and trodden under tire and foot. We have lost our distinctive savor.

This is not a call for the church to abandon democratic governance. What I am proposing for our consideration is that we return to a wholly different attitude toward our decision-making. Rather than vying for power and jealously seeking to

Likewise in referendums on issues, there are winning and losing groups. Winners can feel triumphant and validated in their views. Losers can feel misunderstood, disrespected, and oppressed.

losing groups. Winners can feel triumphant and validated in their views. Losers can feel misunderstood, disrespected, and oppressed. This can be damaging enough in civil government. Yet when a church body uses majority rule for ecclesiastical governance, the moral hazards and spiritual risks are infinitely more.

Perhaps the greatest risk of voting on matters of faith is that we can so easily forget who and what we are. We can mistakenly conflate our feeble human efforts to discern the mind of Jesus with the actual will of God. If 50.1 percent of Annual Conference delegates vote one way or another on a matter doctrine or practice, does this make it the will of God? And if,

enforce the will of the majority, our ethos should seek maximum comfort, accommodation, and space for our fellow disciples who find themselves in the minority.

This is the Brethren way. This is why in a church that long ago left behind a rule of distinctive grooming and dress, our beloved brothers and sisters who faithfully maintain these traditions still feel accepted, honored, and at home in the denomination.

That this may be so ever and again is my warm prayer in the name of Jesus Immanuel. **AMEN**

Bill Scheurer is executive director of On Earth Peace, an agency of the Church of the Brethren. The views in this article are his own, and do not represent his organization.

“Are we more interested in preserving an institution or in nurturing relationships?”

—Mart McKimmy, pastor of Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, at this summer’s Church of the Brethren Annual Conference insight session: “Exploring Alternative Ways of Being Church”

“Sometimes ‘intercultural’ feels like a very contemporary, hip, politically correct thing to do, but that’s not actually the case. It’s a calling and a biblically based way of living together, being conscious of people who are different from us, and being a part of the larger community of Christ.”

—Gimbiya Kettering, coordinator of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of the Brethren

“If I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that’s how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.”

—US Secretary of State John Kerry, a political science major who graduated from Yale in 1966

“Jesus offers us the gift of transformation every day; truly, every moment of every day we have a chance for do-overs, chances to make amends, to get better at doing the right thing the first time around.”

—Donna Kline, director of Denominational Deacon Ministry for the Church of the Brethren

cultureview

► **New research predicting the rise of religious progressives and a conservative decline** presents a challenge to those in the middle, according to a recent Public Religion Research Institute survey. Findings predict the rise of progressives (currently at 19 percent) and the decline of conservatives (28 percent), and shows moderates firmly in the middle, with 38 percent. The poll attributes the decline among conservatives to younger Americans seeking more action-oriented and less doctrinal expressions of faith. But that same factor could spell trouble for moderate churches and denominations, according to experts who examined the study. One of them is pastor and author Brian McLaren, who said the survey suggests moderate groups may have to risk alienating traditional members if they are going to attract and keep the millennial and other

younger Christians. Specifically, that means actively embracing the social justice causes dearest to that generation, including same-sex marriage rights and issues around poverty and hunger, McLaren said.

► Continuing to represent one of the largest shifts of public opinion in Gallup Poll history, **87 percent of Americans now favor marriage between blacks and whites**, up from 4 percent in 1958. These data are from Gallup’s Minority Rights and Relations poll, conducted June 13-July 5. Approval has generally increased in a linear fashion from Gallup’s first measure in 1958, reaching the majority threshold in 1997, and crossing the three-quarters line in 2004. Eleven percent of Americans today say they disapprove of black-white marriage, compared with 94 percent who disapproved in 1958.

Heard 'round the world



“My religion is love and compassion.”
—His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the exiled 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, now living in Dharamsala, India

“There is an incredible range of ways in which the Spirit works. It doesn’t matter how you get there. It really does quite matter where you are.”
—Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Are Brethren on a course to ‘mission drift’?

by Ronald E. Keener

Growing up, I tended to ask questions. A lot of questions. No wonder I became a writer and magazine editor. Of journalism’s familiar five W’s (who, what, when, where, and why), I probably more often asked the “why” question. And as a youth in the church, I probably annoyed people in asking questions. Especially the “why” question.

The other week I renewed acquaintances with a pastor friend. The first thing he said to me was how he remembered I was always asking questions. And he noted, “But your questions helped us make better decisions.” I can only hope people thought so at the time. (There are some 135 occasions in the Bible when Jesus asked questions: “Who do they say I am?” “Do you not yet understand?” “Why are you testing me?” I guess I’ve been in good company.)

It was no wonder that I went into journalism, where asking questions comes with the territory. But I am inclined to believe that churches generally, and church leaders specifically, don’t tend to ask questions—at least not the right questions—about their congregations. More often they are happy with the status quo, the way things are or have been going for years and decades.

They don’t often enough ask the “why” questions—at least, not out loud. Why don’t we grow? Why don’t new people stay? Why are our young people leaving? Why is the denomination shrinking? Why aren’t we reaching new groups? Should we use new worship forms? How do we deal with the cultural changes around us?

Few churches seem to deal with those questions. Of the more than 300,000 congregations in the country, a few

hundred are actually growing, a couple thousand have more than 1,000 in weekend attendance, and most average 75 or 100 in size—not a number large enough to sustain any entity comfortably from an economic standpoint.

Brethren seem content to be just who we are: peaceful, simple, and together. But American churches are dying, and Brethren churches are among them.

Churches begin with promising hopes and lofty goals, many prospering for decades and then, with weak leadership and changing culture, begin to move away from those strong and hopeful years. They begin to drift.

Arnold L. Cook, 13 years ago, called it “historical drift,” the title he gave a book on the same theme, with the subtitle *Must my church die?* Cook is of the opinion that “throughout history, vision dims, core values shift and passion fades in organizations.” He says too that all Christian organizations should be scrapped every 100 years and begun over again—except, he suggests, the women’s missionary prayer circle, the one group that produces the best outcomes.

Historical drift is “the tendency of churches to move away from their original moorings over time,” and he places the blame not on the organizations but on their leaders. “Whether a Christian organization [read that, denomination or congregation] thrives or dies depends on the caliber of its leaders.”

Cook’s concern is deeper and wider than can be discussed here, but he deals with it in four chapters of his book which focus on spiritual revival, in what he calls “historical drift reversed.”

I wrote him on his meaning for historical drift, to which



Bennett Stowe

he responded: “At the root of ‘historical drift’ in denominations and Christian movements are the subtle and not so subtle compromises of biblical authority, theology and church doctrines and discipline.”

He is speaking about more than mere nomenclature, but a few decades back the Brethren were likely to complain about the new trends in the church that “took the brotherhood out of the board, the gospel out of the MESSENGER, and the Bible out of the seminary.”

Churches need to worry about drift too. More likely than not, any given church doesn’t have a mission other than to spread the gospel and reach others for Christ (though evangelism and church planting are not high on the Brethren agenda).

The subset of historical drift is mission drift, what Chris Horst describes as “a reality all organizations face, particularly those that are faith-based.

“Secularization has an almost gravitational pull against parachurch ministries, denominations and churches.

Remaining rooted in the Gospel is not the natural course. Staying true is the exception.”

Horst, who is development director with HOPE International, shared with me that, “It demands immense amounts of prayer and elbow grease to keep our organization ‘Mission True’ as we grow and age.” Horst and Hope International CEO Peter Greer have written a new book, *Mission Drift*, that comes out in February from Bethany House Publishers.

They describe ministries, faith-based organizations, and a seminary that, over time, drifted from the charter or goals or beliefs on which they were founded. “Mission is sneaky,” Horst told me. “In our interviews, we heard many leaders note the way drift seemed to ‘just happen.’ One of the early indicators is when there is a conflict of opinions among senior leaders or board members or elders about the things most core and central to the organization.

“When leaders are in disagreement about the organization or church’s reason for existing, that’s a major red flag of drift.”

Are Brethren too late in plotting our destination to the shore ahead and steering with courage and intelligence for the church that we could be? I still have high hopes.



“We have a rich gift to offer our world if we are willing to remain true to our calling. Our culture needs our organizations to remain richly and distinctively Christ-centered.”

—Chris Horst, HOPE International



Something more specific is required, however. Peter Steinke, who focuses his work on emotional systems in churches and is a respected congregational systems consultant, references Dr. Edwin Friedman about the need for a mission statement.

Friedman, he said, describes “a sailor on a lake who did not have a destination would not know how to adjust the sails to take advantage of the wind. Instead the sailor would meander, get lost or drift. Churches,” he said, “need a mission statement for direction.” And one, he might have added, specific to the heritage and location and focus of that body of members.

Steinke has written that too many such statements are not statements at all, but creeds—much too long. He is of the opinion that a church’s mission statement “should be of one sentence in length (and without more than one comma), understood by a 12-year-old, and repeatable at gun point.

“A second problem is many statements are not converted to actions. They do not inform and shape staffing, budgeting, or programming.”

Cultural shift over the years is a context that changes and needs to be considered as well, he says. “New forms to

meet the challenge of change will not develop without some sense of what the church is about. The word disaster comes from a word meaning ‘without a star.’ Not having a point of destination or orientation spells trouble.”

Mission drift in churches is seen as limping along without a focus. Says Steinke: “Cultural shifts beg for new responses. For one thing, the culture is no longer a supporter of Christendom. Making a difference through personal action, for instance, is what many want to be part of and people want to be ‘on the ground’ to make a difference,” he says.

What churches can do to make a difference, he says, is to repeat, repeat, and repeat who they are, what they are about, and where they are headed. A church that I attended for several years had Micah 6:8 as its mission statement, and the pastor or the congregation repeated that statement every service prior to the message. Every person in that church knew the focus and purpose of that congregation and could repeat it on demand.

Steinke says that declining churches should not be looking at the past. “Many declining churches want to recapture the golden days with the golden pastor. Look to what you can do when your faith becomes active in love. Increasing loving service (outputs) prevail over gains or inputs. Mission is outward.”

He likes the notion of “faithful presence,” of doing God’s mission where one is planted, or as he calls it, “right here. Jesus did a lot of that.

“How does the neighborhood know that we care about it? Ask people—if you came into our building, joined an event, what would you experience? Would their responses be consonant with our self-understanding and beliefs?”

Churches must run as healthy organizations or they will falter. It might not be obvious at any one point in time, but without strong leadership and serious elders and deacons, decline and drift will set in, members become comfortable, and numbers will decline, in the pew and in the offering plate.

The dangers of historical drift, and its subset, mission drift, are numerous. Says Kevin D. Monroe, managing part-

ner and founder of X Factor Consulting, “Left unchecked, mission drift causes confusion, clouded vision, and compromised values. These may cause the organization to lose respect and support resulting in lost donors, employees, volunteers and partners. Worst of all, mission drift may result in organizational shipwreck.” You’d be surprised at the number of churches that close every year or merge with another for the sake of survival.

Not every fair breeze or large donation means good sailing. “Just remember Paul and his shipmates left a place called Fair Havens. ‘When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had obtained what they wanted; so they weighed anchor and sailed.’ Before long they found themselves in a hurricane that resulted in shipwreck,” Monroe says.

HOPE International’s Greer and Horst talk in their book about their ministry being offered a very large check by a donor if they would “tone down” their Christian distinctiveness. In turning down the donation, they looked at the drift in their own organization and what it means to remain on course with its true purpose, what they call Mission True.

More recently, the Brethren have been tempted to embrace the homosexual lifestyle, to rethink the meaning of scripture when it comes to same-sex trends. It’s an example of historical and mission drift that comes to most groups at one time or another. It’s an exception when an organization stays true to its mission. Drift is the more likely course, and without strong leaders it takes the organization, or a church, in a disastrous direction.

By definition, the Brethren Revival Fellowship, organized in 1959, might be seen as working against drift within the Church of the Brethren. They have remained within the denomination, being a leaven to the body, loyal to the heritage and life of the Brethren, while offering another viewpoint on biblical inerrancy as they see the light.

Says Horst: “The core message to churches and denominations? We want congregants, pastors and leaders to ask these questions of their churches and denominations: Who were we created to be? In light of that, what are we called to do today?”

“These aren’t easy questions to answer, but you can’t address the problems of drift without first knowing the answers to these questions. The reason these questions are so important is because the work of our churches and denominations matters mightily to our communities and culture.

“We have a rich gift to offer our world if we are willing to remain true to our calling. Our culture needs our organi-

zations to remain richly and distinctively Christ-centered.”

More than anything, the Brethren exhibit what the authors call “the importance of Good Samaritanism”—a lifestyle of service. “We are not just world-class humanitarians, but Christians. We must do good, but we must not forget we have Good News to share. Do we still believe this news matters? Do we believe it is the best news the world could ever be told? We [the authors] believe a commitment to this News is precisely what keeps us on mission.”

Mission degenerates, and it has for Brethren. The leadership, the seminary, the colleges, the institutions all have moved from their original moorings. Budgets have plummeted, programs are diminished, numbers fall—as we make excuses for our lack of initiative and courage. Drift can be seen as a failure of faithfulness.

Greer and Horst note that “when organizations [churches] surface these issues within their organizations [congregations], it will not be easy. Emotions run high and unspoken tensions emerge. But this pain is healthy. Because only in this pain will organizations [congregations] be equipped to clarify their identity and reinforce it in the future.

“The path to leading a Mission True organization is paved with hard decisions. The sooner those hard decisions are made, the higher the likelihood they will succeed and the less pain the organization will experience in the long haul.”

There are still a few—well, maybe a couple—denominations that are growing, because they know who they are, what they stand for, and are able to articulate that. They don’t attempt to mirror the culture around them. They are different from the mainstream America in which they find themselves. They have retained their saltiness. They know the meaning of the words brotherhood, gospel, and Bible in their institutions.

Are Brethren too late in plotting our destination to the shore ahead and steering with courage and intelligence for the church that we could be? I still have high hopes. ❧

Ronald E. Keener was editor for eight years of Church Executive magazine that focuses on the managing and leading of larger congregations. He was news director and associate editor of MESSENGER from 1970 to 1972. Growing up, he attended the Palmyra, (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. Today, he and his wife live in Chambersburg, Pa., and attend The Brethren Fellowship.

[Read about Church of the Brethren positions on topics alluded to in this article, including human sexuality and biblical authority. The 2012 Annual Conference affirmed the 1983 Statement on Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective, with an amendment encouraging congregations and districts to continue to study and pray about the issue. This summer, Conference delegates reaffirmed the 1979 statement on Biblical Inspiration and Authority. To find these and other Church of the Brethren resolutions and statements, go to www.brethren.org/ac/statements.—Ed.]

Being church in the world

An interview with leaders of the World Council of Churches

World Council of Churches staff Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary, and Natasha Klukach, program executive for church and ecumenical relations, visited the Church of the Brethren General Offices in August. They spoke with Brethren communicators including MESSENGER editor Randy Miller, associate director for donor communications Mandy Garcia, and news director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford. General secretary Stan Noffsinger also sat in. The conversation took place as the council prepares for the 10th Assembly of the WCC to be held in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) this fall.

From your wide perspective on the Christian church, what are challenges that you see facing the church today and what are some opportunities?

Olav Fykse Tveit: Some challenges are unique to each church. We are church in very different places in the world, but there are some things which I see that we have in common.

Wherever we are church, and whatever size we are,

whether we are growing or declining, it's really a challenge for every church not to be preoccupied by itself and its own challenges but really to be committed to be part of a wider, mutually accountable fellowship. I'm quite sure that any church that loses this dimension of its life, and becomes isolated somehow, will lose a lot and even can get into trouble over what it really means to be church. It belongs to the nature of Christian faith and Christian communions to be open, to be local, and to be in the world. It can never be either/or.

A challenge I see in many places in the world, and particularly in Europe and North America, is how can the church become relevant for the next generations? My children's generation and their children's generation? When you're facing these

challenges together, then it's also time to listen to one another. How do we deal with this? But also, how do we listen to those churches who grow, who find other perspectives to their lives than this one? The global reality now, where we are actually Christians in a global village, makes this an issue that cannot be only looked at as white Americans, or white Norwegians who are in a declining community. How can we build relationships to churches where we live—immigrant churches, other churches—that are really developing something together?

Another challenge is how we present our contribution to the world in such a way that it is listened to. Whether it is a witness to our neighbor that our Christian faith is something that really makes sense, or really means something, but also when we speak in public and to those in power. Religion to some extent becomes important again, on the other hand how does it really have an impact? How do we give a prophetic witness that somebody listens to? Again, I think the answer is we have to work on this together.

Actually now a lot of people in the world, including in the western and northern hemispheres, understand that religion is much more than a private issue. There is a new sense that religion is about how we are



“You have had a consistent profile focusing on peace, as part of a Christian witness. That gives strength and also credibility.”

connected in a community and in a society, but also is about the values we want to base our future on. Politicians ask, how can you help us to make better decisions? How can we really see a way forward when we face climate change, when we face poverty? How can you as religions really contribute something?

The enormous potential of religion is also a great potential for us as churches. We should realize that we are on the stage. We need to find ourselves among those who give significant contributions to the solutions that the world needs. There we belong, and there are great opportunities, if we find our way to do this.

We are very interested in how the Church of the Brethren is involved in this country and in other countries, and how you do this.

How do you see Brethren ways of doing things as different than others?

Another one is this willingness to sometimes swim against the stream. To not just follow the majority, not just be part of the power, but be an alternative voice.

Also what I understand is part of the tradition of the Brethren, to be humble and seek what is a more modest approach, not to search for luxury and power as *the* signs of having an influence. I think that must be part of our Christian ethos and maybe you can help other churches also to find a way to be confident in what we contribute through these values.

Tveit: One is that you have had a consistent profile focusing on peace, as part of a Christian witness. That gives strength and also credibility.

Here in the US we’re seeing the decline in the numbers of mainline denominational churches. What can churches do to revive or reshape themselves so that they not only survive but thrive and remain a vital voice in today’s world?

Tveit: I don’t have a formula to that but I definitely believe that any church who is not a church for others will be in trouble—who is not focused on how to serve those who need the church, and who is not including anybody who searches for the church, or who is in need of what the church is able to offer in terms of hope, love, forgiveness, reconciliation.

In any situation, the church must focus on its mission and its tasks, whether we are small or big

or declining or growing. If we lose that perspective then we will be in trouble, all of us. And particularly when we are declining.

And I believe that the church has to be renewed in any generation. None of us will live forever and we need a constant renewal of the church in terms of new people coming in. If the next generation shall find their place in the church it must also be that they feel that the church is actually addressing them, and what their reality and their needs are. I don’t believe that they will say the church’s message for love, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, care for nature, is irrelevant when they find a way to be within that work and that discourse.

But we probably have to work in different ways. So, for example, the North American model of being church as a group with a strong social dimension might be changing, but that does not mean the church ceases to be church.

How is the health of the ecumenical movement?

Tveit: I'm not sure that I'm so interested in analyzing where are we now compared to where we were, because we cannot be the ecumenical movement of the past.

We have to do our job now, plan for tomorrow, and be able to do it tomorrow.

What I find even more important is to discuss what are our strengths and what are our weaknesses, but also particularly our potential role. What can we do with the resources available to us today and tomorrow? We cannot have the resources we had in the '80s anyway, when our staff was three times what it is today.

The ecumenical movement to some extent is a victim of its own success. It raised a lot of issues decades ago that were not raised by all churches: human rights, climate change, gender issues, peace issues, justice issues, issues about unity and how can we go beyond our denominational, confessional divides. But now do you find any church in the world that is not really discussing at least some of these? Also what sometimes was called the evangelical opposition to the ecumenical movement has these issues on its agenda. That's good, but I think we should continue as the WCC to see how we can be in the forefront of addressing what is now important for the churches and for us as a fellowship of churches.

Secondly, we need to renew how we strategize.

How do we have an impact, how do we make a difference? We live in a world that communicates in a



totally different way than 10, or 20, or 30 years ago. It is now more than ever possible to act on a global level with all these means of communication. On the other hand, it's also important to be an organization and a fellowship that has some real substance, that we really go into depth on some issues and make the churches able to make a difference, but also that we make a difference together.

There are new challenges and many of these challenges are not between the churches but within the churches. The most difficult questions which are dividing us as Christians today are not usually between one church and another but within the churches. For example, issues about human sexuality are discussed in every church in the world.

A lot of the issues—how to deal with economic justice, how to deal with peace issues—both unite churches in a new way, but also are ongoing discussions within the churches. And there I think an ecumenical institution like ours needs to offer safe spaces and proper spaces for these discussions, without pretending that we give *the* answers to everything.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



“A challenge I see in many places in the world, and particularly in Europe and North America, is how can the church become relevant for the next generations? My children’s generation and their children’s generation?”

(above, and facing page) WCC general secretary Olav Fykse Tveit interacts with members of the Neighborhood Church of the Brethren in Montgomery, Ill., where he gave the message on Sunday, Aug. 11.

“It’s good to be a Christian right now because Jesus Christ is able to deal with all of us where we are. . . . Christianity has this enormous potential of embracing people of all cultures. And we can make our identity as Christians something real, wherever we are.”



How does Pope Francis—who takes his name from a saint with a well-known love of peace—give you encouragement that a new leader has emerged in the Christian world who appears to embrace peace so strongly?

Tveit: Pope Francis gives a program by taking this name, which is also significant for all of us. By this he says that it’s the call of the church to be with the poor and to work against poverty. He also says something about the search for peace by choosing this name and this tradition of following St. Francis. He’s apparently very interested in uniting all good forces,

particularly among Christians but also among others, to try to address the great needs of our time. So I feel inspired by his leadership. I hope we can have a chance to have a longer meeting than just a minute or two as we had after his installation. I’m quite sure that there is a strong connection between his vision and what the WCC wants to be.

He said when I met him, “Please pray for me.” I also said, “Please pray for us.” This is a shared prayer with the Roman Catholic Church. I think this dimension of his pastoral approach can open up many new paths and also help the Roman Catholic Church to be more focused on how it serves justice and peace, and people who are in need of that. They [Catholics] are extremely involved in many places

in the world, long before this Pope. But I really hope that this Pope is able to inspire them, and to empower them, and to make this a genuine agenda of the biggest church in the world.

Why is it good to be a Christian right now?

Tveit: I’d love to answer that. It’s good to be a Christian right now because Jesus Christ is able to deal with all of us where we are.

We don’t have to be something else to be a Christian. We can be a Norwegian, an American, a Chinese. Christianity has this enormous potential of embracing people of all cultures. And we can make our identity as Christians something real, wherever we are.

The world now faces a lot of challenges in being both local and global, and there are a lot of conflicts of interest related to belonging to one group or the other. Our Christian faith really has the potential to deal with that in a proper way, both in the sense that we can be proud of what we are, but also to be humble in what we are. And acknowledge that I am what I am, but you are what you are, and that’s also what God has created you to be.

If God forgives me and brings me into his grace, that can happen to everybody. There are no limits to God’s love. We learn that through our faith in Jesus Christ. 

For more about the World Council of Churches go to www.oikoumene.org. For more about the 10th Assembly of the WCC go to <http://wcc2013.info/en>.



Back to the future?

How one congregation is making its 'meeting house' useful in today's world

by Bob Kettering

Like many little children, I was taught to interlock my fingers inward and then repeat the phrase: "Here is the church . . ." then, with index fingers point upward say: "Here is the steeple . . ." and then with fingers still interlocked, turn my palms upward and say: "open the doors and see all the people."

I went through the same little exercise with our children, only I preferred they say: "Here is a building . . . here is a steeple . . . open the doors and see the church." I am sure my kids thought I was weird because all the other parents taught them the other phrases. But I wanted to make a point: the church is not a building. The church is people! However, the building where the church meets can also be an important part of the church's ministry and outreach.

The early Brethren in Europe met in homes. When they came to America they erected a building in Germantown to meet for worship and called it a meetinghouse, not a church, just like the Mennonites and Quakers. In the early years, some Brethren continued to meet in homes, but by the early 19th century, meetinghouses were the buildings where most congregations met to worship on Sunday mornings and for love feasts. In fact some of these buildings were actually called love feast houses.

The *Brethren Encyclopedia* states that "In the 19th century a typical meetinghouse was a plain rectangular structure with a loft for overnight guests, a main floor for assembly, and an attached kitchen for preparation of the love feast."

These meetinghouses were plain but practical. The meetinghouse was primarily a place for worship but it was a kind of hospitality center as well which was totally contrary to the church buildings of other Catholic and Protestant groups who called their structures churches.

I believe Brethren had the right idea in calling their structures meetinghouses which functioned as hospitality centers. As Brethren sought to shed our sectarian traits in the 20th century, we closed off the doors on the long side of the building and put in pulpits and raised platforms for the preachers. The congregation now sat in pews facing an altar with a cross and candles, rather than facing one another like in the old meetinghouses. We deemphasized the gathered community for a pastor and altar-centered worship space. We dropped the meetinghouse terminology for our buildings and called them churches, just like the other respectable denominations.

I have tried to call our structure the "church building" so that I could make the distinction between the church as people and the building where the church meets. While something in me wants to call the buildings where we worship and fellowship a meetinghouse, to be honest, many of our "church buildings" are no longer plain and simple in design.

But perhaps, in one sense, that's not so bad.

I have come to realize that the structure that our congregation owns is a tremendous tool for ministry and mission in our community. I am grateful for the large and versatile structure where I serve as pastor in Lititz, Pa. I am even more grateful for a congregation who has for years seen this building as a place for mission and ministry, not just for our congregation for but for a whole host of other groups.

When I was pastor at the Florin Church of the Brethren in Mount Joy, Pa., I remember one evening when my wife observed that the parking lot was full of cars and asked "What is going on this evening?" My reply was "I have no idea." How wonderful to know that our church building was being used by groups not only within our congregation but also for our



community. What a joy to be a part of a community church.

I have recently started to call the Lititz building our Ministry Center. On the bulletin cover and on our church newsletter it reads: Lititz Church of the Brethren; Ministry Center located at 300 West Orange Street. That is what our church building has become. The building is used by our congregation for worship, including two worship services on a Sunday morning (a traditional service in the sanctuary and a more contemporary service in the Family Life Center), for love feasts and other special worship experiences, such as a 6:30 a.m. worship in the chapel each morning of Holy Week, which attracts 40-50 people each day. Our facility also provides space for many recreational, nurture, and fellowship activities.

The building is used for Bible study groups, prayer groups, support groups, small group ministries, volleyball and basketball games, intergenerational events and activities, concerts, continental breakfasts each Sunday morning, a sewing group which raised \$60,000 for our building fund, a quilting group which makes quilts for the Disaster Relief Auction, knitters who make prayer shawls, choir and praise team practices, Sunday school classes for all ages, Vacation Bible School, Wednesday Nights ALIVE which includes classes for adults and children and a full course meal each Wednesday evening from October to March, and SummerKidz ALIVE which is a new sports and activity camp on Wednesday evenings in the summer prior to VBS. We even have a square dance group which uses our fellowship hall one evening a week, with members of our church serving as the "callers."

Each New Year's Day the facility is filled with people from the community for a pork and sauerkraut dinner. Some 200 of our youth and adults prepare and serve food to 1,500 people, with all the profits designated for our youth work camps, mission projects, and travel to National Youth Conference.

In many ways we are a "program church." But of even greater significance are the many outreach ministries which take place in our Ministry Center: a pre-school day care run by the local community center, which allows our pas-



toral staff to have a Bible time with the kids each Friday morning called Faith and Friendship Club; a toddler gym held on Thursday and Friday mornings in the Family Life Center, which attracts nearly 100 young families from the community; a Boy Scout troop and Cub Scout troop which are sponsored by our church and meet in our Ministry Center. Meals on Wheels has been making up to 60 meals five days a week from our kitchen for many years. Recently they told me they were celebrating the one millionth meal served from that kitchen.

TNT (Teens Need Truth), a community youth outreach ministry sponsored by our local ministerium uses our Family Life Center every Monday and Tuesday evening. There was great excitement from the congregation for this outreach to the youth of our community, even though it would mean more wear and tear on the facility.

While it is true we have a large, versatile, and beautiful building, the Lititz congregation has a very generous attitude about sharing our facility with the community for recreation, fellowship, outreach, mission, and ministry. To our way of thinking, our building should be used as much as possible every day and evening of the week.

Not every church may have as large a facility as we are fortunate to have in Lititz. But most of our churches do have a building which is underutilized. In many ways, our buildings are the largest asset our churches own.

The church is not a building, but our buildings can be and should be used as ministry centers. Can we turn the historic meetinghouse model of a hospitality center into a ministry center which extends the mission and ministries of our churches to the communities in which we live? I think so! **AMEN**

Bob Kettering is pastor of the Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. The church is located on a seven-and-a-half-acre campus across the street from Warwick High School and flanked by the Moravian Manor Retirement Community in the town of Lititz, recently designated as the "coolest small town in America" in an online contest run by Budget Travel.



Unlikely conversations

by Chris Keating

Like many new converts, Teresa Macbain was positively ebullient, upbeat, emotional.

She describes her conversion experience this way: “I have never felt so appreciated and cared for, you know?” She tells a reporter that she’s entered a new community, one that has accepted her unconditionally. “New member, just been born—that is what it feels like.”

She’s a convert, but you won’t find her inside many churches these days, because Teresa Macbain converted to atheism. Her story is even more remarkable when you consider that in becoming an atheist she had to abandon her vocation as a United Methodist pastor in Tallahassee, Fla. After all, it is a bit hard to be a pastor when you no longer believe in God. (Read more about Teresa Macbain’s story at <http://m.npr.org/news/U.S./151681248>.)

Some say God is unending love. Some say God is a harsh judge, while some envision God as an anthropomorphic grandpa figure complete with flowing beard. For Teresa Macbain, God became *nothing*. For months she struggled as a pastor, saying prayers she no longer believed, preaching sermons she no longer considered truth. Her double life ended immediately after speaking at a conference for atheists. Many of her parishioners felt betrayed and understandably confused. Macbain says her denominational supervisors wouldn’t meet with her. Her husband continues to pray for her, even as he defends her right to stop believing.

Without knowing more about Macbain’s experience as a

pastor, or more details from her former church, it is hard to draw too many conclusions. One thing is clear: somewhere along the way Teresa Macbain stopped experiencing the presence of God in loving community. She stopped voicing her questions to colleagues and mentors. She misses the songs and the regularity of meeting in community. But if you ask her, she’ll tell you she doesn’t miss God. And if recent surveys are to be believed, she is hardly alone.

Not long ago, a man stopped by our church. He and his family had been members of the church years before I was pastor, and had long since stopped attending. His family had left the church over a dispute with the former pastor, and so I asked if they were attending another church. He stopped talking for a moment. “I am embarrassed to say this to you in your office,” he said. “But I no longer believe in God.”

It was an unlikely conversation, almost like the set-up line to a joke: “An atheist walks into a church, and the pastor says . . .” He was full of many questions, but was tired of churches that said they had all the answers. I don’t know if I was helpful, but I did suggest that one aspect to a vital faith is the ability to ask questions. I assured him that I believed God was always ready to hear his questions.

What would happen if each of us in the church were to engage in one such unlikely conversation? What would happen if we suspended judgment for a bit, and graciously listened to the questions, thoughts, and struggles of those who feel excluded from the church?

What would happen if we suspended judgment for a bit, and graciously *listened* to the questions, thoughts, and struggles of those who feel excluded from the church?

If we're willing to do this, a way to begin might be by listening to the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official in Acts 8:26-40. It's a little story we often neglect, but one that reminds the church of its calling to enter into unlikely conversations.

In Acts, Luke offers baby pictures of the church taking its first steps, learning how to stand up straight and move into the world. Central to Luke's story is the testimony of how the church relied on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead into new directions, boldly revealing God's love. At each turn in the fledgling church's story there are unexpected conversations, plot twists, and countless new believers.

In chapter 8, Philip, one of the first seven deacons (see 6:5), becomes a bold evangelist. Led by the Spirit, he develops a strong following in Samaria, and is then instructed to go in a different direction. The Spirit's leading is direct and specific: Get out of the city, and head out on a deserted wilderness road. It is an unlikely setting for an equally unlikely conversation.

Philip makes his way down this road and suddenly runs into a visitor from Africa. Not just any visitor, but an Ethiopian official who had come to Jerusalem to worship. According to Luke, he's an official of the court of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.

Get it? This man is important.

But he's also not so important. For one thing, he is a minority, a foreigner, certainly not Jewish. Secondly, he is a eunuch—a class of people expressly forbidden from entering the temple due to their physical circumstances. The man is an outcast, yet Luke tells us that he is filled with questions about God. In fact, he has just come back from worshipping in Jerusalem.

The mysterious wind of the Spirit brings Philip and the Ethiopian into a fascinating if unlikely conversation. Philip makes no comment on the Ethiopian's status. Instead, he engages the man in Bible study—but not until the man has invited him to do so. There is no hint of coercion on Philip's part. Instead, he

waits until he is invited, literally meeting the man where he is.

The man had been reading from Isaiah 53:7-8: "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people."

Suddenly, the man lifts up his eyes from the scroll, and asks Philip, "About whom does the prophet say this?" His questions and hunger for God had been growing for so long, but now are voiced so clearly because of his encounter with Philip. He knew what it meant to experience humiliation, and had experienced the denial of justice. He readily identified with the images Isaiah portrayed. Through his conversation with Philip, the man discovered that scripture is not just a story that is beyond our reach. It is nearly always a story that reaches toward us to reveal the expansive love of God. In the hands of an able interpreter such as Philip, the story of scripture becomes good news, indeed.

An unlikely encounter—but one that led to the waters of baptism. Because Philip had been willing to follow the Spirit's nudge, he brought new joy to this man.

Perhaps that is the message for the church today as we encounter persons who have left the faith, or who are filled with questions, or who feel excluded. Perhaps we are called to climb into their chariots and to journey with them for a while, listening to their stories and remaining open to their questions. And like Philip, may we discover the joy these unlikely conversations can bring. 

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.

Letter to president signed by hundreds at NOAC

A letter urging President Obama to “seek life-giving means to assist Syrians as they would seek peace and pursue it” was signed by close to 500 of those participating at the

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



NOAC participants sign a letter to President Obama, urging “life-giving” means in Syria

2013 National Older Adult Conference held in September in North Carolina.

After the evening concert and the next morning, many of the NOAC attendees took advantage of an opportunity to sign

the letter, which was sent along with the list of signatures to the White House by the denomination’s Office of Public Witness.

“Our hearts have ached for the people who have suffered and died at the hands of the Syrian regime, as well as those who have been injured and killed in acts of violence by those fighting the Syrian government. We grieve for the Syrian refugees, and for those caught in the middle and unable to flee the country, including many Christian brothers and sisters. Our prayers are with those who have lost loved ones, and those bearing the burden of this dreadful situation. However, our faith in the Prince of Peace and our sense of radical discipleship lead us to believe there are other ways besides a military solution and air strikes against Syria. . . .”

Full letter is available at www.brethren.org/news/2013/noac-2013/letter-to-president-on-syria.html

Vital Ministry Journey launched in S. Ohio District

Seventy-five people representing 23 congregations attended Southern Ohio District’s launch event of Vital Ministry Journey (VMJ) on Aug. 10. The event was held at Happy Corner Church of the Brethren.

Mid-Atlantic District also was scheduled to launch its Vital Ministry Journey with a Sept. 28 event at Union Bridge Church of the Brethren in Maryland.

Vital Ministry Journey is a congregational vitality process being offered through the denomination’s Congregational Life Ministries. In Southern Ohio District, the Missional Renewal Commission is sponsoring the process. The commission and district staff have been promoting the Vital Ministry Journey process, including planning and hosting the launch event.

Every congregation in the district was invited to send leaders to the presentation about Vital Ministry Journey on Aug. 10. The half-day event began with worship followed by a presentation by Stan Dueck, director of Transforming Practices. Then participants gathered in small groups to experience the Bible study process that is foundational to the process. The event concluded with a question and answer session so that participants could discuss the process with Dueck and district representatives. Church representatives were encouraged to return to their congregations and share their discoveries. The Missional Renewal Commission will follow up with churches to check on their readiness to participate in this congregational vitality process.

Prior to the launch event, on Aug. 9, Dueck held a training session with resource people who have been called to serve as district coaches to work with congregations that participate in the Vital Ministry process. Dueck will continue ongoing training with the coaches by way of scheduled web events.

Find out more at www.brethren.org/congregationallife/vmj.



“Our prayers are with those who have lost loved ones, and those bearing the burden of this dreadful situation. However, our faith in the Prince of Peace and our sense of radical discipleship lead us to believe there are other ways besides a military solution and air strikes against Syria”

Portion of a letter to President Obama signed by many NOAC participants.

Brethren Disaster Ministries help with Sandy relief in Haiti

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed a grant of \$75,000 from the Church of the Brethren's Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to assist L'Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

The damaged homes are in Marin, Haiti, where there was severe flooding in October 2012, brought by Hurricane Sandy. The storm went on to affect the northeast coast of the US where it was known as Superstorm Sandy.

"Haiti was still recovering from the 2010 earthquake when Hurricane Sandy brought four days of rain," said the grant request. "The resulting severe flooding left an estimated 200,000 Haitians homeless, caused 104 deaths, blocked infrastructure/roads, caused loss of livestock and severe damage to agricultural fields.

This led to even more food insecurity and a reignited a cholera epidemic in a country with widespread poverty and hunger."

The Haitian Brethren formally requested assistance for the community of Marin, where approximately 10 percent of families lost their homes in the flooding. Rather than starting a new Brethren Disaster Ministries project in Haiti, staff have requested this grant for a Haitian-led response to the disaster. Funds management and construction leadership will come from the Haitian Church of the Brethren, with oversight and monitoring from Brethren Disaster Ministries. To help support this response, give to the Emergency Disaster Fund at www.brethren.org/edf or by mail to EDF, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Ilxene Alphonse



Destruction in Marin, Haiti: Haitian Brethren survey the damage done by Hurricane Sandy in and around the city of Marin, Haiti, when the storm hit the Caribbean before churning up the East Coast of the United States in 2012, when it became known as Super Storm Sandy.

Rebuilding following sandy helped by Red Cross grant

A major grant from the Red Cross will make it possible for Brethren Disaster Ministries to set up at least two rebuilding sites and repair or rebuild at least 75 homes that were damaged or destroyed by Sandy.

After an initial disbursement of \$50,000, the remainder of the \$280,000 grant will be disbursed quarterly based on the Brethren Disaster Ministries financial and project reports. The grant will cover volunteer support and housing and transportation, tools, and more.



BRETHREN
Disaster Ministries

"Part of what makes this grant so nice is it supports how we work in community with Long Term Recovery Groups," commented Roy Winter, associate executive director of Brethren Disaster Ministries and Global Mission and Service for the Church of the Brethren. Brethren Disaster Ministries' current home rebuilding projects include a project site in Toms River, Ocean County, N.J., among the worst affected regions of the mid-Atlantic coastline. The county saw more than 50,000 homes and 10,000 rental properties damaged or destroyed. Such extreme devastation has severely limited housing availability for displaced renters seeking alternative housing, and Brethren Disaster Ministries is partnering with OCEAN, Inc., a local non-profit, in a project aimed at increasing the supply of safe and affordable rental housing for Sandy survivors.

For more information about the work of Brethren Disaster Ministries go to www.brethren.org/bdm.

upcoming events

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.

Oct. 6 World Communion Sunday

Oct. 18-21 Mission and Ministry Board meeting, Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, Ill.

Oct. 19 Western Pennsylvania District Conference, Camp Harmony, Hooversville, Pa.

Oct. 25-27 The Great Multitude, an intercultural symposium, Wirtz, Va.

Nov. 1-2 Children's Disaster Services training workshop, Cordele, Ga.

Nov. 1-2 Illinois and Wisconsin District Conference, Mt. Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 1-2 Shenandoah District Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 3 National Junior High Sunday

BBT launches information website on health care reform

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) has launched a news and information website titled "ReformWatch," offering information about health care reform and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

ReformWatch offers up-to-date news and information on this sweeping legislation including:

- A timeline that shows when each provision of PPACA is scheduled to be enacted and who is

responsible for responding to each change.

- A regularly updated news site that connects readers with reputable sources in the health care industry and the federal government.

- A glossary of key terms that helps readers make sense of health care reform terminology.

- A page for forms.

- A frequently asked questions (FAQ) section with comprehensive responses from www.healthcare.gov.

ReformWatch E-Alerts, an e-mail service that updates registrants on the latest health care reform news. Find the website at www.brethrenbenefittrust.org/reformwatch.



2014 Annual Conference theme announced

"Live as Courageous Disciples" is the theme that moderator Nancy Sollenberger Heishman has announced for the 2014 Annual Conference to be held July 2-6 in Columbus, Ohio. The New Testament letter of Philippians is the theme scripture.

The 2014 annual meeting is scheduled for Wednesday through Sunday, a change from recent years when Annual Conferences have been held Saturday through Wednesday.

The moderator's theme statement says, in part, "The times in which we live call for boldness, for courage, for fearless living that is faithful to the word and life of Jesus Christ. The world around us is hungry and thirsty for living examples of lives radically committed to following Jesus. More than ever, the church needs to be a community in which Jesus' disciples spur one another on to live courageously in this world.

"My dream for this coming year is that we will take steps toward living out the beginning of our denominational vision statement, which is: 'Through scripture Jesus calls us to live as courageous disciples in word and action,'" Heishman added.

The moderator is encouraging church members to set aside this year to study the New Testament letter to the Philippians together, as a record from the Apostle Paul's life "of truly courageous discipleship." She notes that Philippians has just 104 verses and 2,243 words, and adds a challenge to memorize the whole book.

Brethren are invited to share their experiences of studying and memorizing Philippians, and their stories of courageous discipleship, with the moderator as she travels among the wider church this year. Find the full theme statement at www.brethren.org/ac. A list of daily themes for Annual Conference 2014 is at www.brethren.org/ac/theme.html.

Glenn Riegel



PERSONNEL CHANGES

Donald R. Booz retires Nov. 30 from Pacific Southwest District, where he has been district executive minister since Dec. 1, 2008. Booz also served as district executive for Atlantic Southeast District from 1984 to 1989, and Mid-Atlantic District from 2000 to 2008. Earlier in his career he pastored congregations in Atlantic Southeast District and Western Plains District and has been a marriage and family therapist. He has chaired several local and regional councils of churches, and served on a variety of denominational committees over the years. Booz is a graduate of Shippensburg State College, and holds a master's degree from Bethany Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Chicago Theological Seminary. His future plans include moving to Kansas to live closer to family.

Erika Fitz began Aug. 1 as program coordinator for the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center (SVMC), a partnership of the districts of Atlantic Northeast, Southern Pennsylvania, Middle Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania, and Mid-Atlantic, along with the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and Bethany Theological Seminary. The SVMC office is located at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. Fitz takes up a position vacated by the resignation of Amy Milligan. She grew up in York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren and is currently affiliated with Lancaster Friends Meeting. She holds a master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Emory University.

John Mueller began July 1 as district executive minister for Atlantic Southeast District, serving in a half-time position. He and his wife, Mary, also serve as co-pastors of Jacksonville (Fla.) Church of the Brethren. The Atlantic Southeast District office has moved to the Muellers' home at 1352 Holmes Landing Drive, Fleming Island, FL 32003; 239-823-5204; asede@brethren.org. The former office location in Sebring, Fla., and the former post office box for the district are no longer in use.



Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 301 begins work across US and Europe

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 301 completed orientation on July 16-Aug. 3 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. The members of the unit, their home congregations or home towns, and project placements are:

Luke Baldwin of First Church of the Brethren in York, Pa., is working at the Brethren Service Center. **Stephanie Barras** of Indianapolis, is with OKC Abrasevic in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina. **Nora Boston** of Bonn, Germany, is serving at the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C. **Tobias Domke** of Castrop-Rauxel, Germany, and **Jan Fahrenholz** of Westerkappeln, Germany, are with Project PLASE in Baltimore, Md. **Dylan Ford** of Tipton, Ind., and **Sarah Ullom-Minnich** of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, are serving at Su Casa Catholic Worker in Chicago. **Shino Furukawa** of Mutterstadt, Germany, is serving at Innisfree Village in Crozet, Va. **Tim Heishman** of West Charleston Church of the Brethren in Tipp City, Ohio, and **Sarah Neher** of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, are working with the Youth and Young Adult Ministry serving as two of the three coordinators for the 2014 National Youth Conference, along with Katie Cummings. **Lina Herrmann** of Luedenscheid, Germany, is serving at Human Solutions in Portland, Ore. **Whitnee Hidalgo** of St. Clair, Mich., is working with Sisters of the Road in Portland, Ore. **Esther Kilian** of Koblenz, Germany, is serving at Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati, Ohio. **Andrew Kurtz** of Plymouth (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, is volunteering with Quaker Cottage in Belfast, N. Ireland. **Chris Luzynski** of Roanoke, Va., is working at the Brethren Disaster Ministries office in New Windsor, Md. **Mark Pickens** of Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren is serving at CrossKeys Village in New Oxford, Pa. **Jess Rinehart** of Granger, Ind., will serve in Central America. **Turner Ritchie** of Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, is in an interim assignment at the Brethren Service Center in Maryland, and then will go to the Asian Rural Institute in Tochigi-ken, Japan. **Charlotte Rutkowski** of Hanover (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, is at the Family Abuse Center in Waco, Texas. **Deborah Schlenger** of Paderborn-Wewe, Germany, is serving at Washington City (D.C.) Church of the Brethren. **Julia Schmidt** of Pandora, Ohio, is temporarily at the BVS office in Elgin, Ill., with plans to go to RAND in Zagreb, Croatia. **Johann Toelle** of Muenster, Germany, is volunteering with Lancaster (Pa.) Area Habitat for Humanity. **Mandy Witherspoon** of Columbus, N.C., is at Gould Farm in Monterey, Mass.

For more about Brethren Volunteer Service go to www.brethren.org/bvs.

Kind of like the Brethren

Three hundred and five years ago the first Brethren studied the Bible together in an attempt to faithfully recreate the early church. It's too bad a copy of *Greetings in the Lord* by AnneMarie Luijendijk hadn't made its way through a wormhole backwards in time. They could have known what we now know—that the Brethren did a pretty decent job of recreating the early church, at least judging by the shreds and tatters of papyrus letters preserved in the dry

Egyptian desert near the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus (oxy-rink-us).

These letters don't deal with theological questions, but matters of day-to-day living which allows Luijendijk to answer a question just as pertinent today: "How do you know a Christian when you see one?" Early Christians, like Brethren, addressed each other as brother and sister, but everyone did that in those days.

The biggest clues are given names, use of the singular for God, echoes of the Bible, numerical codes that hide words

like "amen" or "the victory of peace," references to persecution, and most of all, the word Christian.

So what sort of evidence for Christianity do we find, and why do I think the Brethren would have felt confirmation in their choices?

Both women and men shared in the Bible studies that led to the first Brethren baptism, so it's no surprise to find two Christian women making sure people keep up with their reading. So one letter: "To my dearest lady sister in the Lord, greetings. Lend the Ezra, since I lent you the Little Genesis. Farewell from us in God (p.71)." (These may refer to Esdras and Jubilees, much beloved early Christian books which were the moral equivalent of the *Left Behind* series. Brethren historian and sociologist Carl Bowman has taught us that we Brethren devour contemporary culture.)

We meet a man named Demetrianus, donating land to the church much as Ann Rowland of Longmeadow, Md., donated land and saw to it that a new meetinghouse was built.

There's a small rural congregation which, when an edict

from Rome demanded all their gold and silver, made it clear that their simple meetinghouse has nothing of the sort, aside from a few brass plates.

There's a chilling arrest warrant for one Petosorapis, son of Horus, who is described simply as a Christian—being Brethren was enough to get John Kline and Samuel Bowman murdered. And one thinks of P.R. Wrightsman who blessed and fed the Confederate raiders who stole everything from his farm when reading a letter respectfully addressing civil leadership, even while subtly resisting by lack of cooperation or even by playing dumb.

Then there's Kopres who, just like Brethren who paid bounties during the Civil War to avoid military service, arranged for a pagan friend to offer the required sacrifice to the gods during a court case.

Best of all, we meet an overseer (mistakenly translated bishop) named Sotas who, like the old Brethren elders, had a hand in both the spiritual and economic life of the church (in one case carrying cash on behalf of an Olympic athlete). He met with fellow overseers to discuss polity and policies in cities throughout the empire like elders at Annual Meeting, organized hospitality for travelers, and taught new members the basics of the gospel. He also encouraged believers to greet one another with the kiss of peace, another Brethren practice.

Luijendijk's writes clear, compelling, and friendly prose. Yes, the original documents are presented in their original Greek, but she provides English translations for everything. She is also a writer of very chatty footnotes that are at times even more compelling than her text.

Brethren scholar Graydon F. Snyder has been insisting for years we learn more what early Christians believed through their hymns, letters, graffiti, and grave makers than we do from the writings of ancient scholars. Luijendijk demonstrates the same thing!

Greetings in the Lord is a fast read and a fruitful one. It's also a very Brethren one. You probably won't find it at your corner Christian boutique, but a few clicks of the mouse and it will be winging its way to your door. **W**

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



FRANK RAMIREZ

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. **Author:** AnneMarie Luijendijk.

Publisher: Harvard University Press, 2008. Number of pages: 294. In a review, Larry W. Hurtado of New College, University of Edinburgh, says, "For anyone interested in . . . the particulars of early Christians, this book will be interesting reading. For those unfamiliar with the sort of evidence mined in the book, Luijendijk proves an engaging and accessible guide."



Youth sell fair trade products

Selling chocolate as a school fund-raiser seemed harmless enough—that is, until one Brethren youth began looking into how a lot of the chocolate we eat is generated. Upon examining the chocolate industry some 10 years ago, a youth from La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren learned that unfair practices—



including child labor—can be involved in producing much of the chocolate on the market today. He chose not to participate in the school fund-raiser, and instead initiated the sale of Fair Trade products at his church as a way of helping farmers, raising money for good causes, and raising consciousness about where our chocolate comes from.

Having raised \$700 in profit recently from the sale of Fair Trade coffee and chocolate, youth at the La Verne congregation decided to make donations to three charities: Alex's Lemonade Stand, Bread for the World, and Homeboy Industries.

"All of the money raised through this, after expenses, goes solely to charity," says Janet Ober, associate pastor and youth director for the church. "None goes toward such things as youth conferences or events. And each year, the youth decide which charities the money should go toward."

In addition to chocolate, the group also sells coffee, tea, nuts, and other products which they obtain from the Church of the Brethren Coffee Project. According to the website, "As Christians we can address a consumer di-

lemma by buying coffee that is fairly traded. Through this project, farmers and their families earn a fairer share of income, have access to credit and technical support, and gain a trading partner they can trust, a Fair Trade organization called Equal Exchange. At the same time, your congregation can enjoy fellowship and learn more about the world, its economy and our part in it."

If your youth group is interested in a project like this, contact Church of the Brethren, Global Mission and Service, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Tel: 800-323-8039, e-mail: mission@brethren.org. Or visit www.equalexchange.coop/brethren.

Midwest regional youth conference 'Powerhouse' held at Camp Mack

Registration is open for Powerhouse 2013, the Church of the Brethren regional youth conference for the Midwest. The event is organized by Manchester University and this year will be held at a new venue: Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind. The dates are Nov. 16-17.

Registration is available at www.manchester.edu/powerhouse where youth and adult advisors will find a variety of information and forms needed for each participant to register. All forms must be completed for participants to attend.

As in previous years, the schedule will be filled with energetic worship, workshops, recreation, music, fun and games, and good fellowship. Bethany Theological Seminary students Tim and Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey will be the keynote leaders for the weekend, on the theme: "On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Stories from the Garden" (Isaiah 61 and other texts).

—Walt Wiltschek is campus pastor at Manchester University. For more information contact him at 260-982-5243 or wjwiltschek@manchester.edu.



Slowing down for beauty

*How do the leaves look so alive when they're dying?
And how are you so beautiful when you're crying?*

These lyrics written by a friend of mine never fail to remind me that some things are most spectacular when nearing their end, and that sadness can surprise you with beauty.

The change of seasons is one of those things for me, and makes me both restless and comforted. I get excited by the fluctuations of temperature, moisture in the air, and the color of plants and produce. I also find assurance in the regularity of such movement—in remembering that there is normalcy in the ongoing change.

But I have to confess that I haven't always been as aware of these changes, or as affected by them. It's so easy to barrel through days, running to keep up with schedules without a thought as to what the weather is doing. The trick is learning to slow down enough to simply enjoy the beauty of nature. Living simply is not just about doing with fewer material things, but also—and perhaps more importantly—learning to reduce the clutter in our minds and our lives in order to more fully appreciate the rhythms of our world.



MANDY GARCIA

I'm not an expert in keeping a leisurely schedule, but I am trying to slow down enough to acknowledge the beauty in the

dying leaves, and appreciate the hidden blessings in situations beyond my control.

Paying attention to the seasons has even made me aware that my heart moves in a cycle, too: introspection in winter, anticipation in spring, exhaustion in summer, and inspiration in autumn. And throughout it all there is always gratitude—more and more each year—for time to rest, for new life, for abundant produce, and opportunities to start again.

One of my favorite ways to appreciate the waning

abundance of summer and the new food available in fall is to make this delicious chili—a perfect seasonal segue. 

Mandy Garcia is associate director of donor communications for the Church of the Brethren. She also produces eBrethren, stories of Brethren stewards, every other week for the Church of the Brethren. For information, contact mgarcia@brethren.org.

Pumpkin Chili

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small pie pumpkin (acorn or butternut squash are fine substitutes)
- 3.5 cups chopped tomatoes
- 2 cans (19 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 individual chipotle peppers (not two cans), finely minced
- 16 oz. veggie stock, chicken broth, or water
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar or maple syrup
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. each cinnamon and oregano
- 4 tsp. salt (add more to taste)
- 1 bell pepper (any color), diced
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels

Pierce pumpkin a few times with a fork and microwave on high for one minute. Once cool enough to handle, cut in half, remove seeds, and cut each half into six wedges. Peel and cube each wedge.

Pour oil into a large pot set over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent—about five minutes. Add garlic and squash, continue cooking five minutes. Stir in tomatoes, beans, chipotle peppers, broth, brown sugar, and seasoning.

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 25 minutes or until pumpkin is tender. Stir in bell pepper and corn, simmer for another 10 minutes or so, or until corn is bright yellow and peppers are soft. Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve piping hot with your favorite chili garnishes.

Thanks for the digital MESSENGER!

Thanks for such clear instructions [for operating the digital MESSENGER]—so necessary for me. Having them gives me encouragement to try it! I get so lost trying to navigate the Internet. You make it easy, when all I need to do is click on a word or something else. I am so grateful!

Blessings to all who work so diligently to make information accessible to old-timers who race to try to operate even a bit in this age of technology!

Emily Mumma
(via the digital MESSENGER)

Interpretation is an ongoing process

The 2013 Church of the Brethren Annual Report is titled, “Jesus Moved into the Neighborhood.” The word “neighborhood” is an excellent choice. Neighborhoods change, sometimes quickly and dramatically, sometimes slowly.

We are a people of change. In 1708 in Germany when a new prince ruled a particular province, he tried to impose his faith on everyone in the area. There, in the town of Schwarzenau, Germany, a small group of people sought to free themselves from that edict. The Brethren believed there should be no force in religion. Instead they demonstrated uncommon openness. Many voices were heard. Three of those first eight who were baptized were women. They were not told to wait to see how this very dangerous venture would turn out.

The New Baptists, as they called themselves then, replaced what they saw as dogma by studying scripture together to determine what it meant for them. Interpretation is an ongoing process because they realized that the meanings of words may change. In the Elizabethan era, the word “aweful” meant full of wonder. Today, awful means something totally different: terrible. I recently came across a term I had never head before: “I have your back.” What could that possibly mean? I wondered. As it turns out, It means “I sup-

Pontius' Puddle



A MINISTRY OF SHARING | *to secure peace of mind.*

BRETHREN MUTUAL AID SHARE FUND

The Share Fund's mission is to offer financial support to help meet the special needs of individuals and families in the Church and in Church communities.

At the Brethren Mutual Aid Inc., we strive to practice a strong relational style of service based on the teachings of the Church. As part of that Christian commitment, we created The Brethren Mutual Aid Share Fund. We want to spread the word about how together, with our insured congregations, we can use this resource to help people in need.

The Share Fund is a non-profit corporation established by the Brethren Mutual Aid Inc. to provide financial assistance to Brethren-related congregations in their caring and sharing ministries. It is funded by contributions from the Brethren Mutual Aid Agency and other individuals and organizations.

Since the Share Fund's inception, it has provided over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in matching funds to assist individuals and families in crisis. Together we can offer help and hope to those in need.

Brethren
MUTUAL AID AGENCY

For more information on the Brethren Mutual Aid Share Fund Inc. contact us at:

800-255-1243

3094 Jeep Road, Abilene KS 67410-6064

M A A B R E T H R E N . C O M

2013 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE BY TIM HARVEY

GOOD NEWS of GREAT JOY

Peel back
the layers
of familiarity.
Be amazed once again
by the story
of the
good news.

Give the Brethren Press seasonal devotional series to family and friends. Start subscriptions today by calling 800-441-3712.



1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120
phone 800-441-3712 fax 800-667-8188
www.brethrenpress.com

The Great Multitude

a symposium bringing us together

...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples... Rev. 7:9



Continuing the work of Jesus
as we become a more intercultural church

October 25-27, 2013
Skelton 4-H Center, Wirtz, Virginia

www.brethren.org/thegreatmultitude

Registration Deadline: October 11
CEU Credits Available

For more information,
contact Gimbiya Kettering
gkettering@brethren.org 847.429.4387

Virginia District & Intercultural Ministries
Church of the Brethren

port you. I won't let you down." Change often happens imperceptibly.

The early Brethren had such respect for scripture they determined they would never summarize or paraphrase. No 10 or 12 important beliefs would be adequate for them. Too much could be lost over time in the words they chose. Instead, the whole New Testament would be their creed. Benjamin Franklin suggested to one of the brothers that things might be simpler "if you published the articles of your beliefs." The brother responded that they couldn't do that. It would prohibit new insight for the Brethren if they should settle on creedal doctrine. Our beliefs must be open to ponder as we are about the business of discovering new truths.



"We like the stewardship foundation that Everence has. There was never any question we would rely on Everence for health insurance when we turned 65."

— Ted and Sue Noffsinger,
Creskide Church of the
Brethren

(800) 348-7468
Everence.com



Today, as then, all new insights are acceptable for congregant perusal in our denomination so long as they are tested in the body. So we still carry on that tradition where we meet at Annual Conference. The polity comes down to us from that first body of believers in Schwarzenau.

We still are challenged by what biblical words mean today in a constantly changing world. So we listen. Seeking the mind of Christ is not about taking sides. We stumble, try to right ourselves, help each other stay on the path and, when we lose our way, seek the wisdom of God and each other to find our way back. Perhaps we can find a way to understand and accept each other and all those who seek to live together in our neighborhood peacefully, simply, together. For a long time, I had feared we couldn't.

Doris Cline Egge
Roanoke, Va.

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 Tom 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

ministering. proclaiming. living.
New Curriculum for a New Day

BETHANY
Theological Seminary
www.bethanyseminary.edu

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

New Members

Buffalo Valley, Mifflinburg, Pa.: Lance Adams, Amy Jo Adams, Kevin Beaver, Laura Ferguson, Chris Graham, Carla Graham, Teresa Haines, Stacey Hemick Eicher, Colton Kurtz, Shane Kurtz, Heather Kurtz, Lucas Kurtz, Darcy Reitenbach, Mason Reitenbach, Tyler Sauers, Vinson Shemony, Corey Solomon

Faith Community, New Oxford, Pa.: John Costley, Mary Costley

Friends Run, Franklin, W.Va.: Maria Pomales, Tina Mitchell, Lois Mitchell, Elizabeth Mitchell, Bill Mitchell, Jeanne Adkins, Neil Adkins

HIS Way, Mills River, N.C.: Miguel Cervantes, Kevin Cervantes, Leslie Cervantes

Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Allison Hall, Todd Ross, Brenda Ross, Ed Browning, Vicki Browning, Travis McKissick

Maple Grove, Norton, Kan.: Pennie Laughlin, Jamie Ulrich

Modesto, Calif.: Sue Hay, Libby Higgs, Rhonda Mizuno, Pete Duran, Tammy Firch, Rita Matthews, Dave Keller, Kevin McDermott

Palmyra, Pa.: Clayton Garrett, Joyce Garrett, George Keller, Teresa Keller, Jeff

Finkbiner, Audrey
Finkbiner, Gavin Olsen,
Liana Smith, Maya Smith

Smith Creek, Franklin, W.Va.: Luther Hartman, Theodore Hartman, Jr., Connie Hartman, Jeffrey Smith

Woodbury, Pa.: Tim Rush, Jolene Rush, Jarryd Rush, Chelsey Ritchey, Brett Scott

Wedding Anniversaries

Bishop, Lavon and Alice, Defiance, Ohio, 60

Brenner, Don and Mardy, Lancaster, Pa., 60

Dare, Charles and Barbara, Uniontown, Kan., 60

Eberly, Mark and Rachel, Myerstown, Pa., 55

Erisman, Ethmer and Kathryn, Warrensburg, Mo., 65

Fishburn, Alvin and Angie, Lawrence, Kan., 60

Gingrich, John and Jacki, La Verne, Calif., 50

Harms, Byron and Gloria, Dixon, Ill., 60

King, Don and Barbara, Lancaster, Pa., 50

Myers, Philip and Gloria, Manheim, Pa., 50

Rhine, Robert and Barbara, Lebanon, Pa., 50

Roop, Eugene and Delora, Anderson, Ind., 50

Shadley, Jacques and Lois, San Diego, Calif., 55

Sturgill, Owen and Ruth, Hartville, Ohio, 55

Suter, Stuart and Lorraine, Ambler, Pa., 50

Weaver, Ralph and Mary, Palmyra, Pa., 65

Buckwalter, Betty Jane, 93, Lancaster, Pa., May 20

Buffenmyer, Melvin Johns, 78, Leola, Pa., Nov. 23, 2012

Cave, Roger F., 91, Quincy, Ill., April 10

Courtney, Joseph R., 94, Staunton, Va., Aug. 9

Deffenbaugh, Donald W., 78, Salix, Pa., Aug. 4

Dibert, J. Earl, 84, Frederick, Md., July 26

Eckert, Edward C., 93, New Oxford, Pa., July 17

Fox, Darlene Claire, 74, Dixon, Ill., July 21

Frederick, Carlyle Christian, 91, Goshen, Ind., July 31

Fry, Homer L., 85, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 28

Gilbert, Mildred Lucille Morris, 87, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 3, 2012

Glick, John David, 50, Timberville, Va., April 9

Goetz, Gloria Jean, 69, Knoxville, Md., June 10

Good, Deanna R., 75, Eden, Md., Sept. 25, 2012

Good, Robert Cameron, 81, Grottoes, Va., June 11

Grove, Evan Eugene, 90, Hershey, Pa., June 2

Grunder, Florence Carol, 74, Akron, Ohio, May 15

Gump, Anna Lois Dickey, 88, Littleton, Colo., Sept. 26, 2012

Guyer, Jacob Alfred, 96, New Enterprise, Pa., July 21

Haldeman, Peter E., 18, Grantville, Pa., June 22

Harms, Harmon Lee, 77, Bassett, Va., May 24

Harshman, Edythe Brandenburg, 87, Mount Airy, Md., April 25

Hasson, Thelma C., 94, Uniontown, Pa., June 11

Hays, Durward E., 92, Ashland, Ohio, June 27

Heitkamp, Mark S., 61, Brookville, Ohio, April 8

Hess, Harold A., 93, Lancaster, Pa., June 21

Hodges, Joyce Elaine King, 69, Boones Mill, Va., May 21

Deaths

Benner, Charles L., Sr., 72, Hagerstown, Md., July 21

Bortner, Hazel M., 87, New Oxford, Pa., July 15

Bowlby, Willard Frank, 94, Carlisle, Pa., June 3

Hollenberg, Helen R. Bollinger, 80, Fort Wayne, Ind., Feb. 27

Hollinger, Doris Eloise Deacon, 93, Stuarts Draft, Va., June 2

Hollinger, Helen Louise Darley, 96, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 30

Holt, Rufus V., 96, Roanoke, Va., May 9

Hoover, Mary Lou, 75, Martinsburg, Pa., April 6

Hoover, Russell L., 95, Dayton, Ohio, June 25

Hoover, Sara Fisher, 80, Grantville, Pa., July 28

Horner, Ernest R., Jr., 84, Windber, Pa., June 15

Jarboe, Russell D., 89, Quinter, Kan., June 21

Johnson, Curtis L., 82, East Petersburg, Pa., July 8

Jurell, John J., 90, Wellsboro, Pa., June 23

Kant, Doris E., 80, Lancaster, Pa., May 21

Kaylor, Robert F., 87, Tipp City, Ohio, May 12

Kenepp, Janette L., 81, Lititz, Pa., July 21

Kessler, Mildred I., 89, Ipava, Ill., Dec. 30

King, Sara Lou Spigle, 79, Roanoke, Va., Jan. 12

Kipp, Lois Evelyn, 84, Haxtun, Colo., July 5

Kline, Louise Frances, 94, Bremen, Ind., May 1

Kline, Phyllis Henrietta Probst, 65, Edinburg, Va., June 16

Knarr, Irene E. Kintner, 91, North Manchester, Ind., Sept. 16, 2012

Koser, H. Eugene, 84, Lititz, Pa., May 17

Krum, Charlene Flack, 72, Mount Carroll, Ill., May 25

Lantz, Wayne Harlin, 80, Broadway, Va., July 12

Lebo, Charles E., 81, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 1

Leckrone, M. Leona Winger, 91, Silver Lake, Ind., Dec. 13

Leffel, Carolyn I. Holl, 84, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 27

Lehman, Joyce Runk, 82, Mechanicsburg, Pa., May 31

Lichty, D. Eugene, 92, McPherson, Kan., May 20

Lohr, Paul H., 84, Meyersdale, Pa., May 28

Ludwig, Eugene B., 85, Lititz, Pa., Jan. 17

Maarschalk, Lucille, 86, Louisville, Ohio, July 7

Mahaney, Pat F., 74, Oregon, Ohio, June 24

Martin, Jane Burchett, 77, York, Pa., May 26

Maxwell, Esther M. Crouse, 90, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 29

May, Loretta Jean, 57, Frederick, Md., July 21

McAlpin, Dale C., 84, Waterloo, Iowa, June 2

McClure, Thomas W., 89, Lititz, Pa., Aug. 2

McCrabb, J. Harold, 88, Wyomissing, Pa., Dec. 27

McCreary, Harry E., 84, East Freedom, Pa., May 16

McCurdy, Robert E., 94, Palmyra, Pa., July 21

McGary, Jean, 92, San Diego, Calif., June 24

McKinley, Larry J., 76, Kettering, Ohio, March 26

Mehaffie, Joyce E. Radabuagh, 69, Harrisburg, Pa., June 9

Meyers, Hazel Mae, 87, Rockwood, Pa., July 22

Messick, Merville M., 90, Lancaster, Pa., May 24

Miller, Eldon Leon, 77, The Villages, Fla., May 31

Miller, Elnora Lucille, 91, Greenville, Ohio, July 6

Miller, Lena Rodeffer, 79, Westminster, Md., June 11

Miller, Melvin A., 95, Penn Laird, Va., May 8

Morris, John Randall, 63, Perrysburg, Ohio, July 17

Myers, Galen S., 90, Stuarts Draft, Va., May 7

Myers, Gene, 78, Wappapello, Mo., Aug. 15

Nielsen, Philip E., 50, Willow Street, Pa., Jan. 24

Neff, Warren Calvin, 91, Mount Jackson, Va., July 17

Nissley, Sara, 95, La Verne, Calif., March 24

Overholser, Alberta Mae, 85, Goshen, Ind., May 17

Pasley, Drusilla Mary Layman, 96, Boones Mill, Va., June 17

Peel, Charles Richard, 81, Stow, Ohio, March 16

Penrod, Phyllis, 81, Windber, Pa., Aug. 3

Petty, Charles Lee, 79, Essex, Mo., July 22

Plows, Clarence W., Jr., 66, Lititz, Pa., June 15

Poling, Virginia Dare Smith, 101, Hagerstown, Md., July 19

Renz, James E., 94, Mount Morris, Ill., May 19

Reppert, Rosemary Hummel, 77, Wyomissing, Pa., Jan. 14

Ritzmann, Paul L., 76, Elkhart, Ind., June 23

Rohr, Joseph Robert, 90, Boonsboro, Md., July 12

Rohrer, Daniel R., 68, Bristol, Ind., Oct. 23, 2012

Rousselow, Mary Helen, 88, Waterloo, Iowa, July 20

Sheets, Lois Fielder, 86, Roanoke, Va., Jan. 25

Silvius, Dwight C., 82, Polo, Ill., April 18

Smith, William R., 92, Wilpen, Pa., June 29

Snavelly, Miriam J. Hershey, 90, Lititz, Pa., May 13

Sollenberger, Thelma Elizabeth, 90, Wooster, Ohio, Jan. 5

Spahr, Wilhelm, 90, Lititz, Pa., July 30

Stickel, Bertha Lucile, 81, Wakarusa, Ind., Dec. 10

Stickel, E. Lucile, 88, Wakarusa, Ind., Jan. 7

Stine, Beverly E., 82, Argenta, Ill., July 18

Stouder, Evangeline, 96, Elkhart, Ind., Oct. 13, 2012

Strickler, Ruth Ritter, 97, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 3

Stuckey, Harriet Shea, 75, Sylvania, Ohio, March 30

Thatcher, Donald P., 66, Lancaster, Pa., May 10

Vanderwood, Darlene Rae, 77, Middleville, Mich., July 12

Varacalli, Elma Kathleen Harman, 85, Belington, W.Va., June 11

Vaughan, Faye Janieve Miller, 92, Broadway, Va., June 12

Walker, Ernest Hartwell, 96, Berea, Ky., June 5

Wallace, Glenn Sheridan, 94, Lindsborg, Kan., June 3

Walters, Fred D., 85, Cassopolis, Mich., Sept. 5, 2012

Wampler, Marguerite Ausherman Long, 89, Broadway, Va., Feb. 13

Weaver, Willa Mae, 72, Central City, Pa., May 24

Weik, G. Harvey, 88, Myerstown, Pa., May 29

Whalen, Dennis E., 85, Huntingdon, Pa., June 28

Whitman, Ottis Dewey, 90, Middleburg, Fla., June 19

Wickert, Ruth Helen, 94, Dixon, Ill., Aug. 8

Winegard, Hensel Martin, 90, Grottoes, Va., May 18

Yokum, Dollie Mullenex, 86, Morgantown, W.Va., March 31

Licensings

Beery, Amy Marie, S/C Ind. Dist. (Northview, Indianapolis, Ind.), June 9

Ewing, Christopher, N. Ohio Dist. (County Line, Harrod, Ohio), June 9

Gillespie, Carla, S. Ohio Dist. (Trotwood, Ohio), July 21

Grossnickle-Batterton, James, Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Woodland, Astoria, Ill.), May 26

Harlow, Regina Cyzick, Shen. Dist. (Beaver Creek, Bridgewater, Va.), June 23

Hart, Dana Jolene, W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), May 5

Howard, Alex N., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant View, Red Lion, Pa.), May 19

Layman, Brian, N. Ohio Dist. (Hartville, Ohio), July 7

Leberfinger, Mark David, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Hollidaysburg, Pa.), June 23

Richey, Kevin William, Virgina Dist. (Good Shepherd, Blacksburg, Va.), June 2

Shock, W. Russell, Virgina Dist. (Good Shepherd, Blacksburg, Va.), June 2

Sisitki, Kimberly A., W. Pa. Dist. (Robinson, Pa.), May 19

Therrien, James William, W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), May 5

Therrien, Kimberly Dawn, W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), May 5

Therrien, Wesley Dean, W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), May 5

Ziler, David W., W. Marva Dist. (Danville, Rawlings, Md.), Aug. 4

Ordinations

Bell, Charles, S/C Ind. Dist. (Buck Creek, Mooreland, Ind.), June 23

Campbell, Christina, Mich. Dist. (Onekama, Mich.), June 23

Christ, Matthew S., S. Pa. Dist. (Buffalo Valley, Mifflinburg, Pa.), April 28

Dickason, Barbara Leininger, W. Plains Dist. (Antelope Park, Lincoln, Neb.), May 12

Duffey, Andrew C., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Westminster, Md.), June 23

Harrison, Woodrow R., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant View, Red Lion, Pa.), May 19

Hudson, Olen Guy, Shen. Dist. (Melrose, Harrisonburg, Va.), May 12

McWilliams, Jonah J., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant View, Red Lion, Pa.), May 19

Mason, Diane Elaine, N. Plains Dist. (Fairview, Unionville, Iowa), May 19

Mitchell, Elizabeth Anne, Virgina Dist. (Lighthouse, Boones Mill, Va.), June 2

Polzin, Benjamin, S. Ohio Dist. (Potsdam, Ohio), May 26

Shoemaker, Randy, W. Marva Dist. (Sunnyside, New Creek, W.Va.), July 21

Switzer, Kevin, Mich. Dist. (Zion, Prescott, Mich.), June 2

Thompson, Cullen, N. Ohio Dist. (Lake Breeze, Sheffield Lake, Ohio), June 2

Placements

Allen, Michael, pastor, West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa., July 8

Ashworth, Jeremy M., from pastor, Covington Community, Covington, Wash., to pastor, Circle of Peace, Peoria, Ariz., July 1

Beach, Gregory A., from pastor, Woodland, Astoria, Ill., to yoked pastor, Greenville, Grampian, Pa. and Bethel, DuBois, Pa., Aug. 1

Combs, Robert D., from pastor, Oak Grove, Levels, W. Va., to pastor, Hanging Rock Project, Augusta, W. Va., Feb. 16

Davis, Leon S., pastor, Tuscarora Fellowship, Thompsontown, Pa., June 21

Donat, Ann, pastor, Greene, Iowa, July 1

Gaunt, Craig A., pastor, Fairview, Cordova, Md., June 15

Gillespie, Carla, associate pastor for visitation, Trotwood, Ohio, May 14

Godfrey, Richard E., from interim to pastor, Gettysburg, Pa., April 1

Green, Gary W., pastor, Hostetler, Meyersdale, Pa., July 1

Guthrie, Thomas G., pastor, Glendora, Calif., June 1

Hall, Wayne A., from pastor, Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md., to pastor, Dry Run, Pa., June 2

Harrison, Woodrow R., minister of hospitality and visitation, Pleasant View, Red Lion, Pa., May 19

Hart, Dana Jolene, team pastor, Independence, Kan., Oct. 14, 2012

Henderson, Eric B., pastor, Harmony, Myersville, Md., July 15

Hollenberg, Keith E., from interim to pastor, Madison Avenue, York, Pa., Aug. 5

Jarrett, Mary Elizabeth, pastor, Harrisonburg, First, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 1

Lake, Leslie, from music minister, Paradise, Smithville, Ohio and Chippewa, Creston, Ohio to pastor, Polo, Ill., July 7

McWilliams, Jonah J., youth pastor, Pleasant View, Red Lion, Pa., May 19

Meyers, Nathan L., team pastor, Brunswick Fellowship, Brunswick, Maine, Nov. 18

Mueller, John M., district executive, Atlantic Southeast District, Fleming Island, Fla., July 1

Myers, Roger K., pastor, Brandts, Saint Thomas, Pa., June 16

Quintrell, Gregory, from pastor, Upper Claar, Claysburg, Pa., to pastor, Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md., Aug. 18

Sgro, John A., II, from pastor, Lanark, Ill., to pastor, Oakland, Bradford, Ohio, June 1

Sink, Barry D., pastor, Monte Vista, Callaway, Va., July 1

Therrien, James William, team pastor, Independence, Kan., Oct. 14, 2012

Therrien, Kimberly Dawn, team pastor, Independence, Kan., Oct. 14, 2012

Wehrle, Richard C., from interim to pastor, Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va., July 15

Whitmer, Keith B., pastor, Grottoes, Va., May 26

Watching paint dry

This shouldn't take long, I thought. Famous last words.

Our son's bedroom needed re-painting. Not the whole room, just the wainscot. Years ago, we had painted it dark blue to tie in with the blue-and-white-striped wallpaper on the top half. But we wanted to brighten things up a bit, so the blue paneling was going to become "Swiss coffee."

Having painted nothing in decades, I did a little research online and discovered that this was going to take considerably more time and effort than I'd imagined, involving sanding, two coats of primer and two coats of paint. And that doesn't count prepping the room: all furniture to the center, everything covered in plastic, then applying that special blue painters' tape to cover all areas bordering the wallpaper, floor, doors, and windows where you don't want paint to go. (Realizing this much labor was involved, I made a mental note that next time his room needs painting, I'm going to bring my son in on the project.)

Maybe I'm too thorough—or just too slow—but preparation and sanding took the entire first day (partly because I was too cheap to buy a power sander). The following morn-



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER EDITOR

stories quite frequently throughout the day, as it kept me abreast of current events the entire time I worked.)

With the first coat dry by mid-afternoon, I began applying the second—and, thankfully, final—coat. After it was on, I stood in the room and, yes, for several minutes, watched paint dry. It was actually more fun than I expected it would be, in no small part because I knew I was not going to have to apply another coat.

The morning of the fourth day I peeled off the tape, bundled up the plastic, and cleaned my rollers. I'd like to say that the room was perfect, but I spotted a few areas that required touch-up, so before hammering the paint cans shut, I dutifully dabbed areas where dark blue peeked through.

Even now, weeks later, I can still see areas that make me realize I'm going to have to fetch the cans from the garage one day and do a little more work. Some jobs will never be done, it seems. It made me think of a line from a song a friend of mine wrote long ago: "How much shall I be changed, before I'm changed?" And will there ever come a time when I'll truly be *done*—as in changed for good?

I wonder if God sometimes thinks about us in that way. God sees that we're never quite done; we're forever needing a little sanding, a little touch-up maybe. Sometimes, I expect God realizes we're in such disrepair that we need a new coat of paint (which, I now know, takes a *lot* of time and effort).

The same can be said for churches, I expect (and I'm speaking metaphorically here, although I'm sure some build-

Thankfully, God will keep working on us no matter how much sanding, primer, or paint we require.

ing, I applied the first coat of primer. I slathered it on thick, hoping just one coat would do. But the blue paint was pretty dark, and I knew it would need another. Putting on the second coat was how I spent my evening.

I was glad, the morning of the third day, to finally be at the actual painting stage. What a pleasure it was to see that "Swiss coffee" cover the dull primer, giving me a glimpse of what the room would finally look like.

(In addition to learning a little about painting in this process, I also learned that National Public Radio tends to repeat

ings could benefit). Some congregations may be humming along and call for only a little touch-up from time to time. Others may require a power sander, two coats of primer, and a roller full of paint in a patient hand to revitalize peeling boards and chipped molding.

Thankfully, God will keep working on us no matter how much sanding, primer, or paint we require. In the end, few will ever know how much work may have been necessary to bring us back to our shining selves. God tends to keep such matters close to the vest, beaming in admiration as we dry. *W*

COMING IN NOVEMBER: The amazing peace witness of one famous bumper sticker



*“At Juniata I developed my faith,
met inspirational people, and
had experiences that formed my dream
to pursue a career in which I can
make a difference in the lives of others.”*

—Molly Walmer '13, peace and conflict studies with a secondary emphasis in Russian

At Juniata, students are challenged to **think**, encouraged to **evolve**, and empowered to **act** in a global world. Most Juniata students complete one (or more) internships, nearly half study abroad, and everybody gains hands-on experience in and out of the classroom. And **we guarantee students will graduate in four years or less.** The result? Our students' outcomes—from **jobs to graduate school placements to service to global experience**—speak for themselves.

www.juniata.edu

Your Brethren College Network

- Bridgewater College
www.bridgewater.edu
- Elizabethtown College
www.ETOWN.edu
- Juniata College
www.juniata.edu
- University of La Verne
www.laverne.edu
- Manchester University
www.manchester.edu
- McPherson College
www.mcpherson.edu
- Bethany Theological Seminary
www.bethanyseminary.edu
- BCA Study Abroad
www.bcaabroad.org

JUNIATA
COLLEGE 



in alleviating *hunger*
we all have a part to play



Discover some ways you can play a part at www.brethren.org/gfcf.



GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS FUND

To contribute, write your check to Global Food Crisis Fund and send to Church of the Brethren,
1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin IL 60120. Or give online by visiting www.brethren.org/gfcf.