

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

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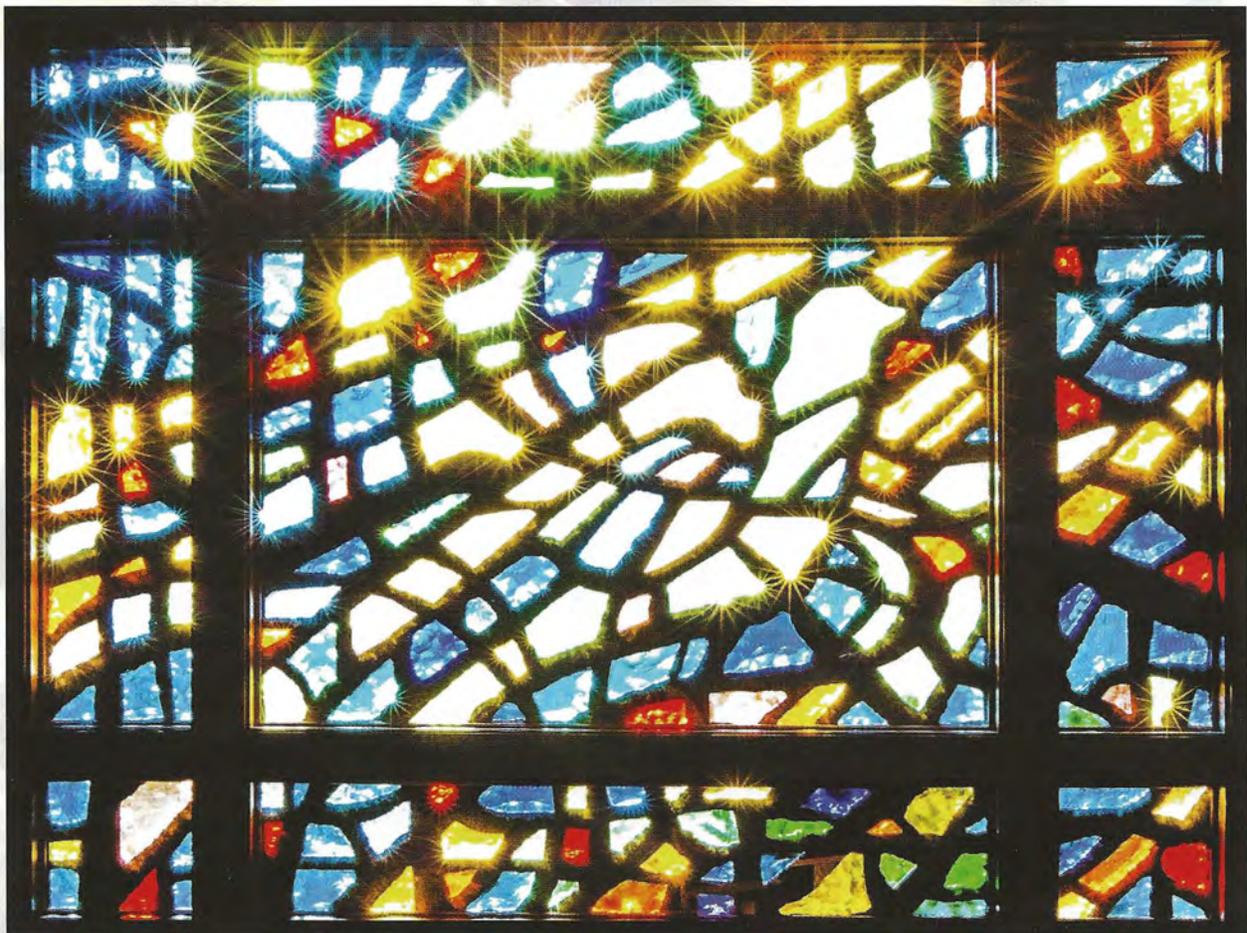
## NIGERIA TODAY AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT



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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Susan Mark



Roxane and Carl Hill



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## 8 Nigeria today—an eyewitness account

Growing up, he'd heard countless stories about the Brethren in Nigeria, but, despite having traveled to many places around the world as a peacemaker, Cliff Kindy had never been to Nigeria. This spring he was sent there by Global Mission and Service. While there, he worked with the Nigeria Crisis Response team and wrote an account of what he witnessed.

## 10 Canoes and ocean liners in Nigeria

One group can't do it alone when it comes to providing assistance to those struggling to rebuild their lives in Nigeria. Roxane Hill—co-director along with her husband, Carl, of the Church of the Brethren's Nigeria Crisis Response—describes how the work there is being carried out at the grassroots level.

## 15 We are witnesses

When a white pastor from St. Louis, Mo., drove with his son to Ferguson to visit the place where Michael Brown had been shot and killed by a police officer weeks earlier, he realized that he would never again consider himself merely a spectator to such events, no matter where they may occur.

## 18 Creating a climate for peace

What does advocating for a stable climate have to do with promoting peace? In the final installment of their series on a faith-based response to climate change, Sharon Yohn and Laura White claim the two are more closely related than you may imagine.

## departments

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Cover image by David Sollenberger

**M**y very first editing lesson was an impromptu one during high school. My mother, a former English teacher, was reviewing one of my papers and suggested removing the word “the” in a number of places. She made her way through the paper crossing out only that word, and the result was an essay that was suddenly tighter and crisper. Ever



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

since, my life’s work has been to remove and rearrange words that are standing in the way of clarity.

One word that can be surprisingly obfuscating (see what I did there?) is “we.” In a typical draft of a resolution or statement, for example, the word can mean “we Brethren” or “we Christians” or “we Americans” or “we humans”—sometimes within the same paragraph. This can be complicated to sort through.

It’s complicated enough that people might want to consider the word carefully. “We” sounds inclusive, but can be deceptive. Once when I met up with a new group of people, the leader announced a song by saying, “Let’s sing a song we all know.” Since I didn’t know it,

that’s all it took for me to know I was an outsider. In other words, the friendliness of “we” depends on its meaning. “We” is a fence, and its meaning depends on where the fence is placed.

One song doesn’t mean much, of course, but the fences are set up in other places too—around churches, neighborhoods, socioeconomic groups. It’s easy to think that the view from our personal yard is the norm. A first step in seeing beyond that is to recognize that the fence is there.

After that, how can we get to the other side of “we”? From inside the fence one can ask these questions—about everything from consumption of news to discussions at church: What part of the story is not being told? Whose voice is missing? Who is my neighbor?

These are questions that are sorely needed in a world of us and them.

*Wendy McFadden*

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Chiques Church of the Brethren

*Organizers for the fundraiser at Chiques Church: Carolyn and Don Fitzkee, Marianne Fitztee, Dick and Cathy Boshart, Jake and Jean Saylor, May Ann Christopher, Paul and Sandra Brubaker, along with Nigeria Crisis Response co-directors Roxane and Carl Hill.*

**Congregation Close-Up**

## Chiques gives generously

**T**he Church of the Brethren in the United States has responded to the crisis in Nigeria with an outpouring of resources to bring relief and hope to our brothers and sisters in that country who are living daily with the threat of violence.”

Jennifer Cox, a member of Chiques Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa., should know. She made that statement following a successful mid-April fundraiser that she helped organize at her church for the Nigeria Crisis Fund. A dinner and a silent auction held at Chiques generated \$25,100 according to Carolyn Fitzkee, another church member and district missions advocate for Atlantic Northeast District.

Carl and Roxane Hill, co-directors of the Nigeria Crisis Response for the Church of the Brethren, were on hand to provide first-hand accounts of the situation in Nigeria from their recent visits to the country.

“There are many churches in the denomination that are holding similar events in order to raise money for the Nigeria Crisis Fund,” Roxane said. “We believe that efforts like this to help the people of Nigeria show that God is at work in every congregation. This is an opportunity to see real transformation in the churches and experience the presence of God in a greater way.”

Pastor Randy Hosler, in his sermon titled “Giving,” pointed out that the Bible says, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38).

The Hills expressed their gratitude for the generosity displayed by churches like Chiques. “This is truly a giving church,” Roxane remarked.

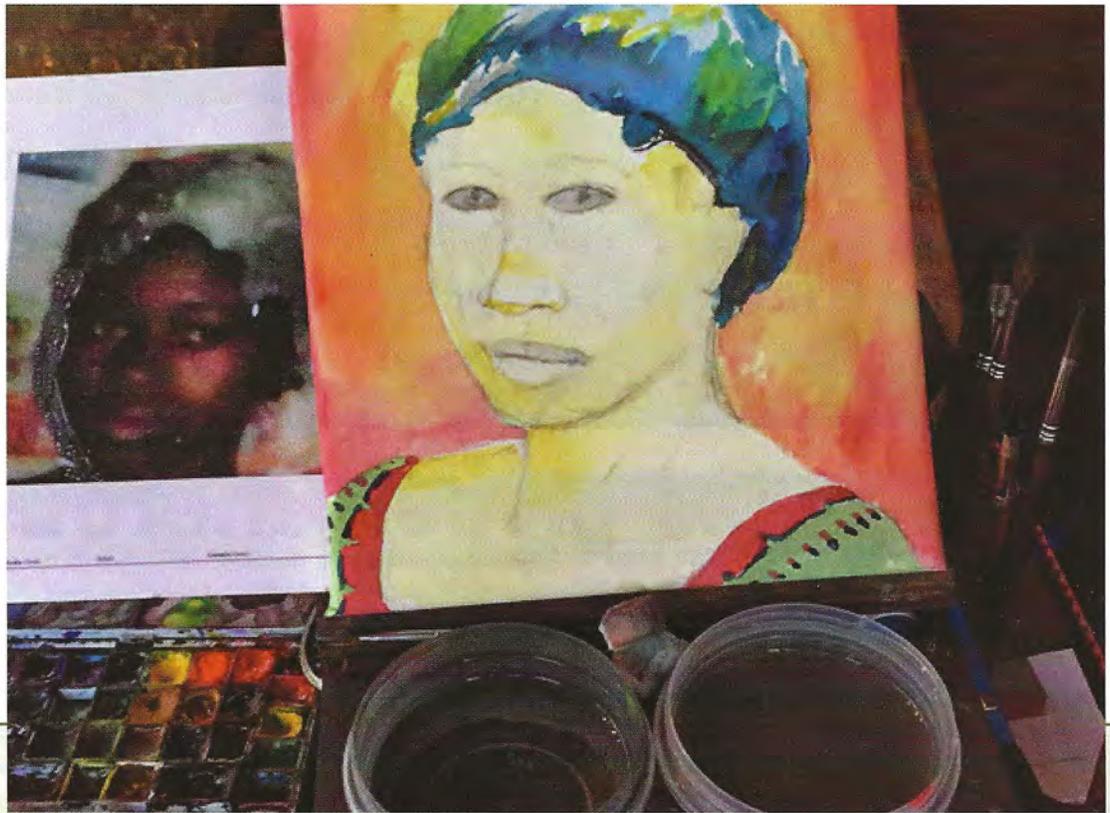
—Carl and Roxane Hill are co-directors of the Nigeria Crisis Response, a cooperative effort of the Church of the Brethren with Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). For more about the Nigeria Crisis Response go to [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis).

**by the numbers**

**70,000**

Dollar amount Brethren Disaster Ministries staff have directed for Nepal earthquake relief from the Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund.

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](mailto:messenger@brethren.org).



Brian Meyer is working on completing paintings of each of the 233 girls who were abducted in Chibok, Nigeria. A portrait of one of the girls, Asabi Goni, is shown in process.

## Brethren artist is painting each of the Chibok girls' portraits

**B**rian Meyer, an artist and a member of First Church of the Brethren in San Diego, Calif., has been featured in *Ventures Africa* magazine for his efforts to paint the images of all the schoolgirls abducted from Chibok, Nigeria, on April 14, 2014.

Meyer is the creator of an image that incorporated the name of each girl into a watercolor painting that was featured on the June 2014 *MESSINGER* cover, and also used for a social media "poster" on the one-year anniversary of the abduction.

Meyer's current project is to paint an image or portrait of each girl. The San Diego Church is hosting the project and providing space to hang the paintings.

"They have published photos of 142 of the girls,"

Meyer wrote in an e-mail explaining the project. "Rebecca Dali, of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) has also helped by providing a list of 187 girls with their ages, parents' names, and the like, which is the most accurate. . . . For those without pictures, I am just leaving it blank." Meyer has completed some 15 pictures so far, out of the 233 girls said to be missing.

Each painting is done in watercolor stretched over an 8-by-10 frame like a canvas. He is assembling the pictures on a wall at the church which, when completed, will be seven feet tall, and 24 feet wide. Meyer estimates the project will take about six months to complete.

For more about Brian Meyer and his work, go to [www.facebook.com/artbybrianmeyer](http://www.facebook.com/artbybrianmeyer).

Serving others



## Local Catholic church raises funds for Nigerian Brethren

**Brethren congregations around the US** have responded with an outpouring of generous support for their Nigerian brothers and sisters who have been brutalized for over a year by Boko Haram. But lately, it's not just Brethren who are responding to victims of the violence there.

"When Susan described what was going on in Nigeria, I knew it would bother me until I did something," said Connie Weir, a member of Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church in Claremont, Calif. "This is a very worthy cause. It brings tears to my eyes every time she shares about it. I knew I had to support Susan and the Church of the Brethren in this endeavor."

Connie Weir heard La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren pastor Susan Boyer describe the horrific conditions in Nigeria during a conference recently. While her own church actively supports many other worthy causes, the plight of the Nigerian Brethren moved her to act. She orga-



*La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren pastor Susan Boyer (left) joined Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church members Connie Weir (center) and Josette Siqueiros Sanchez for an event organized by Weir at the Claremont, Calif., Catholic church that raised funds for the church of the Brethren's Nigeria Crisis Fund.*

nized a music-and-ice-cream fundraiser at her church in early May, and invited Boyer to speak. Boyer, whose parents were missionaries in Nigeria, was born in the country, and often draws upon her personal memories of it when sharing. An 11-minute video prepared by the denomination

provided more recent images and accounts of events in the country.

"I was so profoundly moved that our neighboring Catholic church would raise funds to help our denominational siblings," Boyer said. "For me, this evening was a sacred act of ecumenical solidarity."

### Landmarks and Laurels



**Deanna Beckner** has been presented with the **Faith in Action Award** by the Office of Religious Life at Manchester University. The award is given annually to a student who has contributed to the Religious Life and Campus Ministry programs at Manchester, and put his or her faith into action on the campus and in the larger community. The senior communication studies major from Columbia City, Ind., comes from a five-generations-long line of Manchester alumni. She has been a Campus Ministry assistant in the Religious Life office since her first year at Manchester, and is president of Simply Brethren and a long-time participant in the Radically Obedient Brethren Outreach Team. She plans to enter Brethren Volunteer Service in the fall. "They, and the placement site where she ends up, will be getting a dedicated, indefatigable worker with a big heart, a ton of gifts, and a rock-solid and growing faith," said campus minister Walt Wiltschek.



**Kimberly A. Kirkwood** of **Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren** and a 1983 graduate of Bridgewater (Va.) College has received the college's West-Whitelow Humanitarian Award. At the Manassas Church she has been a youth adviser and coordinated a mentoring program for 8th and 9th graders. She is a certified volunteer with the Church of the Brethren Children's Disaster Services, and provided child care assistance following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, staying for two weeks in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi.

## Another look at family

**I** have been posting old family photos on Facebook in recent months. Some pictures go back seven generations. I attribute my interest in family history partly to the fact that all of my grandparents—five out of eight great-grandparents and even one great-great-grandmother—were still living during my early childhood.



TOM WAGNER

Many of them in turn had known their own grandparents and great-grandparents during their youth.

Sharing family lore was often less a recitation of historic events and more a recollection of living memory. Posting photos is a way to extend those memories to another generation.

The personal, multi-generational relationships these photos represent helped develop my identity. The longevity of a number of our common kin

helped maintain the larger network of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. Earlier bonds of economic cooperation continued through my childhood.

During the early 1900s, it was common for three generations of my mother's relatives to be living together on family farms. Though my grandparents' adult children eventually maintained separate households, a couple of my uncles con-

step-relationships were common in the past.

I'm aware of a few such incidents among my 18th and 19th century ancestors. Yet this demographer failed to note that traditional structures of extended families were often in place in order to give stability to smaller units in crisis. On the other hand, the "family values" crowd often fails to understand that the social and economic forces, which have so scattered and isolated us, were at work long before women began punching timecards. The consumer economic dreams of 1950s suburban family life, which many people still pine for, created much of the economic, environmental, and social brokenness of our time. We may have to look to the pre-industrial past for lifestyle models that gave men, women, older children, and active elders meaningful roles in household economics. A multi-generational, extended family approach could provide parental support, child-rearing, elder care, and mentoring of youth. One important change would be that men would have to share the decision-making process more equitably than in the past.

Of the tasks I mentioned above, child-rearing remains a key task for families, in spite of our diminished structures. Whether parents are single or coupled, they rarely raise children successfully on their own. It requires a broader community effort.

Perhaps we are now too scattered to rebuild traditional extended family structures. However, we all need a sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves. Developing

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**Perhaps we are now too scattered to rebuild traditional extended family structures. However, we all need a *sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves.***

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tinued to share farm labor with older family members.

My dad shared partnership in a car dealership with his father and two brothers until we moved to Indiana. Following the end of those economic arrangements, we enjoyed frequent visits, occasional child care, letters, and phone calls. These relationships helped form my own identity less as an individual or even part of a nuclear household, and more as a member of an extended family.

All of this got me thinking about the nuclear family, which became the norm around the middle of the past century. But some claim the nuclear family was a historical anomaly. I first heard that idea from a demographer who once spoke at our college in response to family values rhetoric during the late 1970s. She based her assertion on lower life expectancies of past centuries. "Until death do us part" came early to many couples, and parents often didn't live to see their offspring reach maturity. Hence, multiple marriages and

new cooperative relationships requires greater intentionality than did old extended family patterns.

I've been thinking about the collective relationship of the early church following Pentecost (see Acts 2:44 and 4:32). While some scholars dismiss the phase as either a failed social experiment or an interim arrangement before a quickly approaching apocalypse, it seems more likely that this new relationship was rooted in deeply held cultural patterns. Extended family households were the norm among ancient Mediterranean peoples. Many of those who joined the early church found themselves cut off from past relationships. The church became their family. Living in community resulted both from their deeply held love for each other and from economic necessity—something to ponder in the wake of Mothers' Day and Pentecost, and with Fathers' Day on the horizon. 

Tom Wagner is a former Church of the Brethren pastor.

**“From the pews and aisles, people lifted their voices to say ‘Amen!’”**

—Gimhwa Kertering, director of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of the Brethren, commenting on the the denomination's 2015 Intercultural Gathering held Harnsburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren

**cultureview**

► **The Christian share of the US population**

is declining, while the number of US adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing, according to an extensive new survey by the Pew Research Center. While the drop in Christian affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults, it is occurring among Americans of all ages. The survey of more than 35,000 Americans finds that the percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years.

► **“Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values upheld by our respective faith traditions,”**

representatives of some 50 Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish organizations said on May 1. The interreligious statement came in a joint call to the 191 governments participating in the world's largest disarmament treaty. The call, co-sponsored by the World

Council of Churches, was made during civil society presentations to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York City. The signatories pledge to make their respective faith communities more aware of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons.

► **The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons**

is the common factor in over 250 conflicts witnessed across the globe in the last decade, the United Nations Secretary-General told the Security Council May 13, pointing to 50,000 deaths along with displacement levels unseen since the Second World War as direct consequences of such violence. “The recent entry into force of the the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) laid the foundations for a framework of arms transfer controls, including small arms and light weapons and ammunition,” said Ban Ki-moon. “A universal ATT, adequately implemented, is critical to removing the tools for armed conflict.”

**“In Christ all things have been transcended to form a unity that establishes a new kind of community. Not by way of eradicating diversity but by embracing diversity in a deeper unity. . . . Someday the church will all be one; it’s time for us to begin living out that unity.”**

—Theologian Scot McKnight, in an interview with Jonathan Merritt titled “Can Churches Disagree and Still Stay Together?”

**“Thanks be to God for the generosity, compassion, and love the Brethren have shown for the people of good faith in Nigeria—just as they did 100 years ago for and with the Armenian people!”**

—Church of the Brethren general secretary Stanley J. Noffsinger, in a letter sent recently to the congregations of the denomination

**Heard 'round the world**



**“Christians must resist without violence the persecution they suffer, and support persecuted communities with love and goodness and generosity.”** —Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

**“I’ve learned about the almost unimaginable capacity for the human spirit to forgive . . . and I’ve been reminded countless times of the courage and goodness of people.”**

—Dave Isay, at the April 2015 TED Conference in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, on what he has learned about human beings since creating StoryCorps in 2003



# NIGERIA TODAY

## AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

by Cliff Kindy

**F**ormer Brethren missionary Owen Shankster drilled many wells in Nigeria. One of the ways he and his colleagues increased the depth of the wells was by lighting blasting fuses down in the hole, and then being pulled out quickly in a bucket on a rope before the explosion.

One time he lit the fuse and called to be pulled out. No one answered. He called again. Still nothing. He hollered again, more urgently. Finally his helpers heard him, pulling him out seconds before the blast.

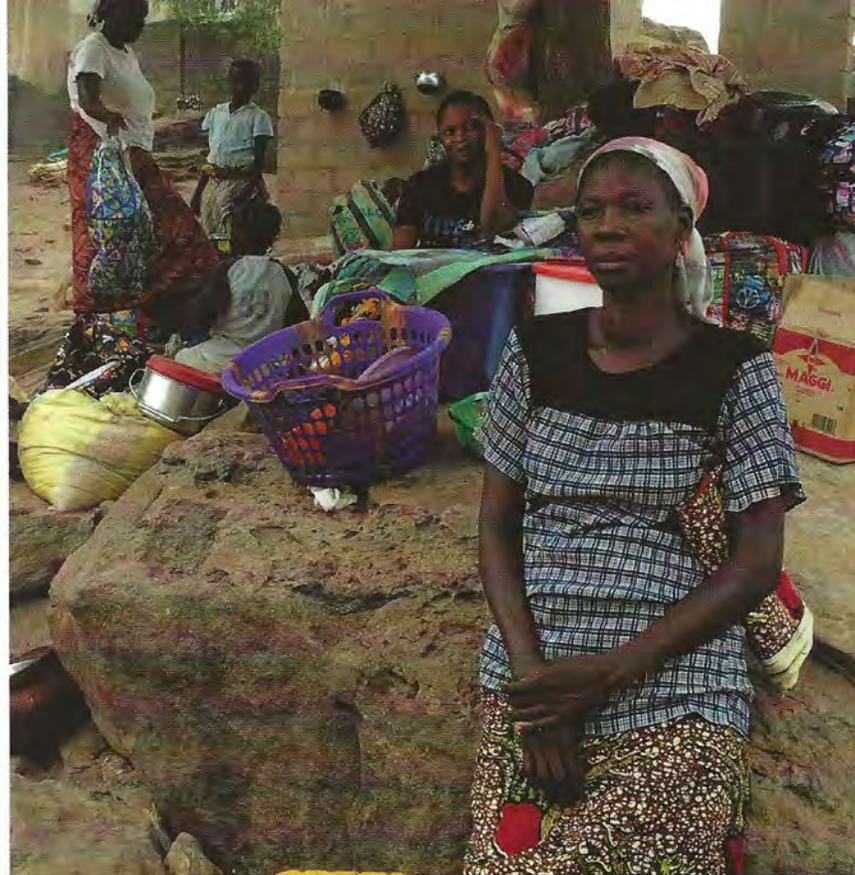
Over the years, I had heard many stories from Nigeria, but I had never been there. This spring, I decided to go. While I was in the country, I witnessed not just the turmoil Nigerians have endured, but also their resilience as they rebuild their homes and their lives.

This year has been a very difficult year for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Boko Haram, an Islamist insurgency group, has intensified its attacks across communities in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states in the northeast region of Nigeria where

EYN has its strongest presence.

Boko Haram has clear Islamic connections, although it defines evangelism as the destruction of all that is not compatible with its understanding of Islam. They believe that the killing of all apostates encourages the Apocalypse and the coming of God's reign. Anything Western is "haram," bad, forbidden. As a result, Nigerian government institutions such as police stations and military bases became targets because Nigeria had alliances with the West. Western education was wrong, so schools were attacked and students kidnapped or killed. Western medicine had negative connotations, so clinics and hospitals have been bombed. The only thing coming out of the West that they embrace is violence.

In April 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped more than 200 women students from a school in Chibok. Most of those women were from EYN. Some escaped but most are still held by Boko Haram more than one year later. A group of 10 people at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, offered to be exchanged for the release of



the women. EYN leaders said they would never put anyone in such a dangerous place, and delegates at the Conference discouraged such an action.

Through the summer, raids by Boko Haram increased in EYN areas. In late October 2014, the EYN headquarters was attacked and EYN staff fled before the onslaught. The nearby Kulp Bible College (KBC) also was evacuated. A temporary EYN Headquarters Annex has been set up in Jos, a day's drive from the vulnerable location near Mubi. Kulp Bible College was planted near Chinka, just north of Abuja, the capital, in the center of the country.

The displacement of the entire EYN staff was a symbol of the devastation that had impacted the entire denomination. Entire districts had no churches left standing, and many communities were abandoned because of the danger from Boko Haram. Church buildings had been burned, homes destroyed, the harvest from fields burned, businesses looted, and EYN members killed.

But EYN was not the only target. Other Christian denominations suffered the same fate but with less impact because they were not as concentrated in the three northeastern states. More Muslims died than Christians because they had assumed they would be safe when Boko Haram came into a

community. In Waga, the Christians fled. Boko Haram invited the Muslims to come pray with them. Following prayers they asked the 200 Muslims how many wanted to join them in the struggle. Five stepped forward. The others asked for time to consider the invitation until the next day. No time was granted. Boko Haram gathered them in groups of 10 and killed the first 10 with an ax, the next 10 with a cutlass, and the next 10 with a gun. Then they repeated the action until nearly 200 Muslims were dead.

In August 2014, EYN's sister denomination in the United States, the Church of the Brethren, sent representatives to offer support amid the crisis. They helped put a framework for a relief response put into place. EYN had never experienced a disaster of this magnitude before. It was November before a Crisis Management Team was chosen and commissioned by EYN leadership.

Mission 21 (formerly known as Basel Mission) has been an EYN supporter over the years and also has made a serious commitment to partner with EYN and the Church of the Brethren in this relief response.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with connections to EYN already were responding to the disaster. The Center for Caring Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI),

**“ I witnessed not just the turmoil Nigerians have endured, but also their resilience as they rebuild their homes and their lives. ”**



Roxane and Carl Hill

*A mother and her newborn are happy to be safe at Vinikilang church camp in Yola.*

under the leadership of Rebecca Dali—wife of EYN president Samuel Dali—and Lifeline Compassionate Global Initiatives (LCGI), an interfaith effort with leadership from EYN staffer Markus Gamache, were providing food aid to displaced families, settling them in safe locations, and offering support to the families in Chibok.

CCEPI has attracted the attention of the Nigerian vice president and received aid to distribute to displaced families. Sister Rebecca and her NGO are working closely with other relief organizations to meet the needs of large numbers of displaced people near Yola. LCGI has built 50 homes in a new interfaith community in Gurku just north of Abuja. It may be that some of those displaced people will return home if security allows, but for most this will become a new home where families start to eke out a living on strange land.

One major piece of the Church of the Brethren support was to strengthen the structure of EYN, a structure that was destroyed by the displacement from the headquarters and

# CANOES AND OCEAN LINERS IN NIGERIA

by Roxane Hill

**I**n the face of a crisis as large as the one confronting the church in Nigeria, more than one approach is needed. That's why the Church of the Brethren's Nigeria Crisis Response is being carried out through two types of organizations.

One is Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) and the other is non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The NGOs are like canoes that can be easily maneuvered through the waters of the crisis. They are small, change direction easily, and can reach places less accessible to bigger ships. EYN is like an ocean liner. It's a massive organization that, when equipped, can provide huge resources. The ocean liner is also harder to get moving and it cannot reach all areas. We need both the quick action of the canoes and the steady, sustained response of the ocean liner.

In March, my husband, Carl, and I traveled to Nigeria and checked in with both the canoes and the ocean liner. The canoes are traveling quickly to provide

much needed help, and the ocean liner is performing its function at capacity. Come along with us and explore these two forms of the Nigeria Crisis Response.

## The canoes

**Lifeline Compassionate Global Initiatives (LCGI)** has set up a permanent camp in Gurku near Abuja. This camp is unique in that it is purposely interfaith, welcoming Christians and Muslims. The local chief has endorsed this camp, which was dedicated in May 2014, and 724 people have resettled in the area. Homes were rented for the families while houses



*Displaced persons building their homes at Gurku Interfaith Camp.*

are being built. Displaced people have helped make the mud bricks and build 56 three-room structures. The camp has a bore hole for water and pit latrines to help in sanitation, and cooking buildings are being constructed. Families are selected randomly for the homes, with Muslims and Christians interspersed.

Future plans include a medical clinic, church, mosque, and school. The camp has set up a ruling council and there are managers on site to supervise construction. Land for farming is made available so that families can provide for themselves in the years to come. LCGI is the model for future interfaith centers.

**Favored Sisters Christian Foundation (FSCF)** is helping in the much-needed niche of education. Children have been out of school for up to a year, and FSCF has put 500 children back in school. This includes paying school fees, providing uniforms and books. With the help of another organization called Reconciliation Trainers Africa,

## “ One major piece of support was to strengthen the structure of EYN, a structure that was destroyed by the displacement from the headquarters and the devastation across the local districts

the devastation across the local districts of the denomination. The disaster could well have been the death knell of the denomination, but the strong support from Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Church of the Brethren enabled the EYN leadership to think toward new possibilities.

This was not the first time a disaster had faced the Christian community. The followers of The Way in Acts were ravaged by Saul and his cohorts. The early Anabaptists faced burnings, drownings, and imprisonment from those who saw their living faith as apostate. So Samuel Dali dreamed of this crisis as the moment that could move EYN from a more paro-

chial setting in the rural northeast of Nigeria to the center of the country. This would allow easier expansion across Nigeria and facilitate the spread of EYN into neighboring countries.

Tens of thousands of EYN members have fled into Cameroon to escape the deadly attacks from Boko Haram. In one UN camp there are 12,000 EYN members along with 4,000 Muslims and 10,000 other Christians who gathered to survive in a more secure location. Six EYN congregations have been formed to meet the spiritual needs of those EYN refugees. The EYN district secretary in the camp has approached Cameroonian government personnel to explore land possibilities



*Students at a school for displaced children.*

they have opened a small school that will also be home to 60 orphans. FSCF is using displaced teachers, and their staff includes a pastor and his wife.

We were impressed with the loving care that all the children were receiving from the principal, the teachers, and the NGO leaders. The staff plan to do trauma awareness as part of their curriculum, and our US volunteers will help in this area.

**Center for Caring Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI)** has been working with Nigeria's most vulnerable people for several years. Led by Dr. Rebecca Dali, wife of EYN president Samuel Dali, CCEPI was a forerunner in the relief effort. They were able to get food,

*Rebecca Dali distributes household items for CCEPI.*

clothing, and household supplies to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) very early in the crisis. Staff travel extensively to register IDPs and to bring them aid. Their excellence has earned them sponsors like the International Rescue Committee, and the Nigeria Emergency Management Agency selected them to distribute their relief materials.

CCEPI is employing more than 25 displaced persons, and has helped provide food for more than 10,000 people. They have held trauma workshops, paid school fees for 14 orphans, provided medical assistance to HIV/AIDS victims, and developed a skills acquisition center to teach new livelihoods. Rebecca Dali has met with the



United Nations and hosted journalists. She visited Chibok and brought aid to the parents of the kidnapped girls on the one-year anniversary of their abduction. Her incredible energy and leadership has made CCEPI a force to be reckoned with during this time of crisis.



**Women and Youth Empowerment for Advancement and Health Initiative (WYEAHI)**, run by Aishatu Margima, is providing livelihoods for displaced people, giving them independence and a sense of self-worth. The livelihoods include such things as sewing and small

*(continued on next page)*

## “EYN staff families are still trying to survive. Their belongings may be destroyed or inaccessible. Relatives may be missing or dead. What will it take for them to return to some kind of normalcy?”

to plant six new EYN churches.

EYN families are displaced all across Nigeria in addition to neighboring countries like Cameroon. EYN is encouraging people to settle in their new locations. The Crisis Team has purchased three plots of land where new communities will be birthed with homes, clinics, schools, and churches. EYN is expanding into new regions of the country.

But the violence and devastation is far from over. Trauma has severely impacted the church. The leadership has to lead but trauma has slowed creativity. EYN staff families are still trying to survive. Their belongings may be destroyed or inaccessible. Relatives may be missing or dead. What will it take for them to return to some kind of normalcy?

The matter of leadership is just the tip of a mammoth ice-

berg of trauma. Most congregations have faced assaults from Boko Haram directly. Adults and children have seen family members killed or kidnapped, their homes burned, churches leveled. They have lived from hand to mouth in the bush or fled into neighboring countries. Parents and children have been separated.

The few EYN congregations that haven't been under direct attack have had to deal with the trauma second-hand. They may have hundreds of displaced people living in their church grounds, maybe dozens of extra people living in their households. They have listened regularly to the stories coming out of the tragedy. Trauma that is not healed will keep reappearing in tragic new ways.

The Crisis Team has an intentional focus on trauma heal-



courtesy of WYEAHI

### The ocean liner

Our ocean liner, EYN, is providing the bulk of the crisis response. The first step—a vital one—was to make the ship sea-worthy. This included resettling the leadership and building a temporary headquarters (now referred to as the Headquarters Annex) in the safer area of Jos. Originally built as a dormitory for Hillcrest School students, Boulder Hill was converted in December to offices for the EYN leadership. Moving the staff to Jos was a huge undertaking. There were costs for food, transportation, rental of homes, furnishing of these homes, and school fees for the children.

As part of the strengthening of EYN, more than 6,000 copies of the church's daily devotional were printed for use by churches and individuals. In March 2014, 48 of the 50 district leaders met for a retreat. That was followed by the ministers' conference with more than 500 ordained ministers. The Majalisa (Annual Conference) was then held in May. By holding these regular activities, EYN was able to demonstrate that it is still functioning.

animal production. WYEAHI provides training in record-keeping, cleanliness, salesmanship, and maintenance of tools such as sewing machines and food grinders. We were able to visit a man who had received a sewing machine. He had gotten a contract to sew security uniforms and was so thankful to have a new job.

For WYEAHI, which gives priority to widows and child-headed families, it is a struggle to turn away applicants. More than 1,000 people applied to receive help when only 180 gifts were available. The press covered the last distribution and gave high praise to Margima and her organization. WYEAHI has plans to continue the livelihood gifts both in displaced areas and back home when it is safe to return.

Another aspect of readying EYN was to form a crisis management team. This team has a manager, materials coordinator, estate officer, medical response officer, peace officer, accountant, secretary, and spiritual advisor. The team is currently functioning on all cylinders with all parties fully engaged in their work.

Peace and trauma awareness are a big part of the crisis response. Nearly everyone is traumatized in one way or another. People are displaced, their homes and churches have been destroyed, they are without food and clothing, and they have no way to make a living. Mennonite Central Committee has helped EYN by sending representatives to Rwanda for training and by holding workshops for pastors, women's leaders, staff, and youth. They will continue to assist in training facilitators for the ongoing work. EYN has a significant opportunity to show Nigeria and the world what it means to live peacefully together.

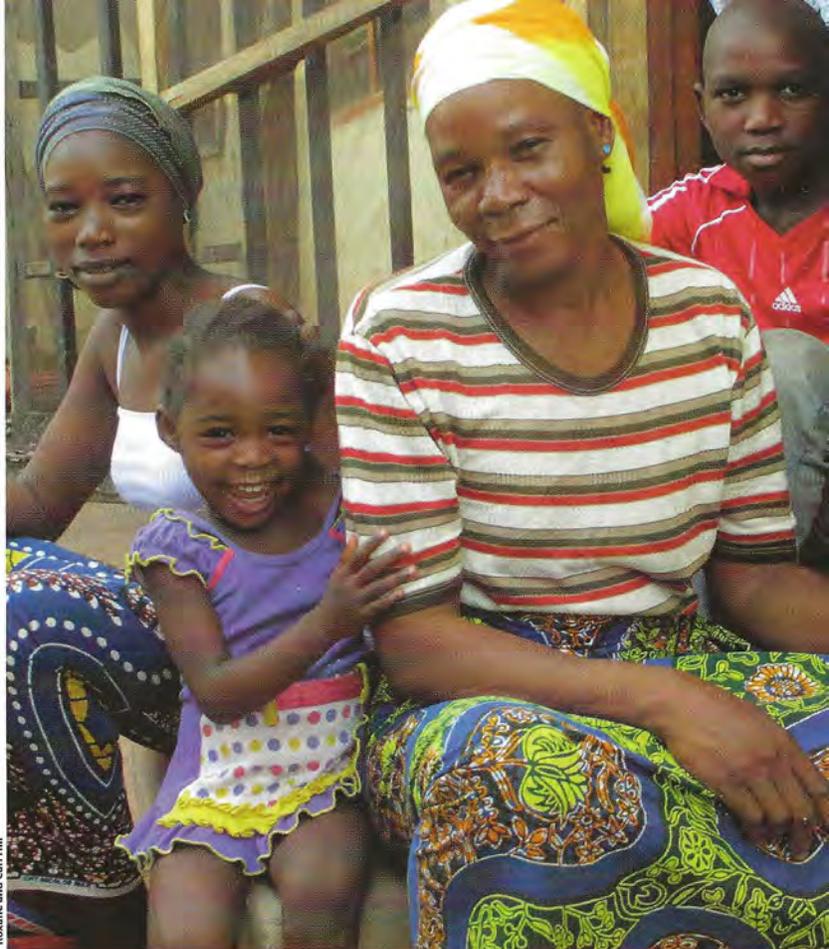
Distribution of food and household supplies is a huge ongoing task. Teams have held distributions for more than 18,000 people at 12 sites and have given

*Displaced families at the camp in Yola.*

ing. The first workshops were with displaced pastors, trusting that they would take it back to their congregations. Menonite Central Committee (MCC) in Jos has supported the training of EYN members in Rwanda where the Society of Friends (Quakers) has developed an effective trauma healing training for trainers after the genocide in that country. MCC also had a special training for EYN staff in early February and another for experienced trauma leaders in Jos—a group from which a select group will receive more intensive training before being sent out across the denomination.

Susan Mark and Asabe Moses were in that group of trauma leaders. They have taken their training to a diverse group of women from all sectors of EYN for a step-down training that these women will take out into their own communities and places of work. Trauma work has many miles to travel over these next years but the process has begun.

Although EYN is a peace church, it leans strongly toward passive peacemaking. Perhaps because of the trauma there have been few visible efforts to engage and interact with Boko Haram. If readers understand Acts 9 as the story of Saul in an early manifestation of Boko Haram, then the reluctance of Ananias to engage with the church ravager Saul may set an



Roxane and Carl Hill



courtesy of EYN

**Foundations are laid for the care center near the capital of Abuja.**

some assistance to more than 12,000 people in Cameroon. As soon as one distribution is over, there is barely time to catch their breath before it is time to prepare for another set of distributions in another area.

Medical help is also being provided through the disbursement of medicines and covering hospital bills for those without income. June through October is always a lean time for subsistence farmers as they await the next harvest, and this year will be even worse because so much of last year's harvest was destroyed. Displaced people hope to return to their homes, but there will be a great need for food distributions there as well.

One of the largest projects being taken on by our ocean liner is the building of care centers. These sites will serve as temporary homes for people as long as they need them and will become refuges of safety for the future. Many will become permanent villages, and EYN hopes to build schools and churches at many of these sites.

There are many steps involved in providing these care centers. First, land is found and purchased. A plan is laid out for each site with an area for the shelters and plots for farming. Water sources must be established. Then the building can begin. Simple mud or brick structures with tin roofs are built for

each family. There will be more families in need than structures available. A large part of the settlement of the care centers will include clearing of farm land and planting crops. Simple farm implements, seeds, and fertilizer will be required. Leaders and a form of self-government will need to be established. The care centers also will need medical clinics, and the children will need to get back in school.

As the crisis in Nigeria continues and we try to rebuild lives and churches, we need to have all our boats in the water. The canoes will be going wherever needed, changing direction and focus areas quickly. Our ocean liner will be moving steadily, providing the much-needed relief and stability to the response. Pray for both the canoes and the ocean liner as they work together for this immense response. **RU**

Roxane Hill and her husband, Carl, are co-directors of the Nigeria Crisis Response, a cooperative effort of the Church of the Brethren with *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria* (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). For more about the Nigeria Crisis Response go to [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis).

Randy Miller



Rebecca Dali and Cliff Kindy at a 2012 Mission Alive conference.

example for EYN today. But Ananias did then agree to lay hands on Saul at Jesus' urging, for Saul's healing and receiving of the Holy Spirit. Where are the Ananiases in EYN who will do that to the Sauls of Boko Haram, so that a new leader of the faith might emerge?

The violence within the communities has frayed the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Though many EYN extended families are composed of both Muslims and Christians, the fact that Boko Haram forced Muslims to identify Christians and their homes has led to mistrust between the groups.

There are a few interfaith efforts like LCGI that have brought Muslims and Christians together in their displacement. They recognize that for genuine resolution of the violence to come to Nigeria it must be a joint work. CAMPI, another interfaith project, grew out of the EYN Peace Committee and has nurtured interfaith peace groups in schools to grapple with inter-religious frictions and develop relationships of trust and common peace-building actions. CAMPI planned an interfaith conference for youth leaders across Adamawa State to counter any trends toward violence prior to and after the presidential election that was held on March 28, 2015.

Nigeria is evenly split between Muslims and Christians. If the Nigerian faith communities can figure out how to live together creatively and peacefully, Nigeria can serve as a global model for both Christian and Muslim nations. Both faiths are very evangelistic and both have a dramatic appeal to young people. Young people from both groups have provided protection for the centers for worship of the other group during holy days. Both have found common cause as they face the horrors of Boko Haram. Responding to hunger, displacement, and homelessness in the present time—and doing it together—has formed a bridge of unity. There is potential for interfaith

common ground that can provide some answers to global conflicts if each faith can grant some grace to the other.

Injustice and greed can still derail this unity. When Islam first came to Nigeria, it brought education and political expertise that allowed the Hausa/Fulani groups to excel over their African tribal neighbors. The advancements that came with Islam did not benefit everyone. Then that injustice led to a strong slave trade and a division between the righteous and the lost. British colonialism

extended that injustice and brought Muslim dominance to the political sphere in north and middle-belt Nigeria.

With Christian missionary work, the African tribal groups benefitted from education, health care, clean water, and economic advantages. The Arab/Muslim groups were left out for the most part if they chose not to join the new faith. So Christians obtained the good government jobs requiring new skills. They had the benefit of better health care, and Muslim youths especially became fringe.

Christianity can help address that injustice and provide opportunities for everyone regardless of faith. It could even be seen as a viable aspect of evangelism if it is an evangelism without force or manipulation. Surely it relies on some real trust that this God whom both faiths claim to obey will bring the reign of God in ways that we all can abide by, without either of us intervening on behalf of God.

The rebuilding of devastated villages and the rebirth of a denomination will take years to accomplish. The difficult part lies ahead. There will be abundant opportunities for volunteers from the Church of the Brethren in the United States to assist in the rebuilding. Are you one of them? 

Cliff Kindy, of North Manchester, Ind., returned home in March from a term of service in Nigeria volunteering with the Nigeria Crisis Response team. He has previously served with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Iraq and the West Bank of Israel/Palestine, and also has some 45 years of experience with disaster relief work as a volunteer with Brethren Disaster Ministries.

## **Zumunce a kafa take (fellowship is in the feet)**

Americans typically think helping means we will be doing many things and using every minute to do some good. But Nigerian culture is a different. For Nigerians, being together is just as important as what gets accomplished. Here is an example of that: When someone dies, there is the burial to attend, but more important is visiting the grieving family at their home. For at least a week, the family does no work but sits outside their home and receives visitors. The women sit together on one mat and the men on another. So you do not bring flowers or casseroles. Instead, you go and sit with them.

What does this mean for our volunteers? It means they might not always be busy. There will be a lot of time sitting together and talking or just hanging out. We show our support by going. We walk hand-in-hand, we discuss issues, and we sit together. Fellowship is in the feet: We go there to simply be with our fellow Brethren in Nigeria. —Roxane Hill

A painting on one of the boarded-up Ferguson store fronts provides a message of peace plus a little tribute to Imo's, a local pizza place.



# WE ARE WITNESSES

by Chris Keating

Paul Saberman CC BY/DC/CC BY/NC

**F**erguson, Mo., is just 28 miles away from my house. But in many ways it is a whole different world.

Last August, my son and I drove up to Canfield Drive, the tree-lined street where police officer Darren Wilson had shot Michael Brown weeks earlier. We turned off West Florissant Avenue, the busy boulevard where angry protestors had torched and looted businesses following Brown's death. Weeks later, camera crews were still present, but the only other crowds were peaceful protestors walking along Canfield Drive. Holding signs, the string of protestors inched closer to the place where Brown had been shot.

We saw children playing in the park opposite from the apartments where Brown had lived. People gathered to hear a street preacher. Gospel songs filled the air, and a single path of roses pointed the way to the site of the shooting. A rough wooden cross was erected near where bystanders had been held back by police lines the day of Brown's death.

When we reached the place where Brown had died, I suddenly realized something. We were witnesses, not just spectators. In the weeks to come, the image would stick with me.

We were witnesses to the deaths of Tamir Brown, age 12, shot by Cleveland Park, Ohio, police as he was holding a BB gun; and Cameron Tillman, 14, who was killed by sheriff's deputies in Terrebonne, La., and who also was holding a pellet gun which resembled a pistol. We are witnesses to the death of VonDerrit Meyers, 18, who was shot by St. Louis police officers outside a market late at night. Meyers' family contends he was unarmed; police reported recovering a handgun near his body. We had already seen the tape of Eric Garner, 43, who was choked to death while being detained by New York Police Department officers last July.

And now we have all witnessed the deaths of Walter Scott in South Carolina and Freddie Gray in Baltimore.

"I would wonder if this is a new trend or whether it is just making it into the news more regularly," said Nathan Hosler, director of the Office of Public Witness for the Church of the Brethren. "Either way it is troubling, but perhaps for different reasons. In both cases, certain lives are valued less. This is troubling and goes against our fundamental beliefs, and should lead us to be concerned for all people."

“When we reached the place where Brown had died, I suddenly realized something. We were witnesses, not just spectators.”

“ In Ferguson and throughout St. Louis, healing those divisions has begun through the witness of artists, residents, and children who have used paint brushes to bear witness to hope. Hundreds of volunteers painted messages of peace and hope on the boarded-up windows of businesses.

According to ProPublica—an independent, nonprofit, investigative news organization—young black males are 21 times more likely to be shot by police than young white males. While there are gaps in official statistics, it is clear that there is a racial disparity in the use of deadly force by police.

Of course, there are times when police officers are legitimately fearful for their lives. There is no doubt that law enforcement is a dangerous enterprise, and good policing deserves the community’s respect. Yet, as Hosler points out, it seems that certain lives may be valued less than others.

I first learned the meaning of the common New Testament word for witness in my college religion classes with the late Vernard Eller at the University of La Verne. When the New Testament writers speak of “witnesses,” Eller taught us that the Greek word is “martyr,” from which we received the word “martyr.” That is our calling as Christians, Eller would point out, reminding his classes that there is a big difference between a mere spectator and a truthful witness.

When I was a young child, my parents took me to see Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden in New York City. I was a spectator, and it was an amazing show. I was enthralled, but if I was handed a subpoena today and forced to testify in court, I—as a mere spectator—would be fuzzy on the details.

But a witness relates truthful testimony. As faithful witnesses to racial injustice, it is time for Christians to take the stand and tell what we are seeing. We are witnesses, just as Jesus tells the disciples in Luke 24.

In that post-resurrection appearance, Jesus stands with the frightened disciples and points to the wounds on his hands. He reminds them of the testimony of scripture, and entrusts

them with the message of pronouncing repentance and forgiveness of sins. Then comes the clincher: “You are witnesses of these things.”

In light of the violence we have seen, Hosler thinks it is important to consider the church’s role in proclaiming repentance. A few days after the riots in Baltimore this spring, Hosler, who is also a minister at the Washington City Church of the Brethren in Washington, D.C., said that repentance is one aspect of the church’s response to racism. It’s a concrete way of bearing witness to God’s acts of reconciliation.

Hosler said that churches can offer “repentance when we have been complicit in or contributed to patterns of racism, or have created and maintained divisions in our churches and communities.” He added that churches can then follow “the lead of churches or individuals in our churches who are from the affected communities in order to stand with and support their struggle.”

Driving away from the scene of Brown’s shooting, my son and I began talking about what we had seen. Down the street, we stopped at a big chain grocery store to buy a soda for the ride home. Police and National Guard units were using the parking lot as a staging area. Armored vehicles sat next to minivans, shopping carts were parked next to Humvees. The contrast between people going about their daily lives while surrounded by a militarized police force presence was stunning.

This is what we are witnessing, I thought to myself. We were witnessing businesses both large and small trying to stay alive following days of looting—a pattern that would be repeated in November when the grand jury returned its decision to not indict Officer Wilson. We were witnessing a media feeding frenzy. We were witnessing mothers and fathers holding their babies and standing for justice and peace. We were witnessing poverty and the lack of educational opportunities. We were witnessing fear.

Brown and my children grew up in the same county, rooted for the same St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, and drove across many of the same highways. Yet they witnessed different realities. Only one of my four children has ever been stopped by a police officer—and that resulted in a small fine for an expired tag. We experience inconvenience, but in Ferguson and other places we are witnessing injustice.

Driving down Canfield Drive, I realized that we could also become witnesses to healing as well. The lingering impact of Brown’s death led my congregation to hold a series of candid but healing conversations with members of the African-American community. Eight weeks of talking reminded us that we





Paul Sableman CC Flickr.com

are all witnesses, in one way or another, to the blurred lines between privilege and racial injustice.

It is a conversation that more churches should consider having. Hosler suggested that churches have a particular opportunity as well as a responsibility to bear witness against racism. “Regardless of the reality of individual congregations,” Hosler told me, “the church, broadly, is a necessarily multi-ethnic and international, including people across political, socio-economic, and racial lines. We should rejoice that the church is not just American or white or Protestant or any other limited identity. This is something to celebrate and is a gift to a world that divides itself arbitrarily. Unfortunately the church also tends to forget this and divides itself in way that God does not intend.”

In Ferguson and throughout St. Louis, healing those divisions has begun through the witness of artists, residents, and children who have used paint brushes to bear witness to hope. Hundreds of volunteers painted messages of peace and hope on the boarded-up windows of businesses. Ferguson native Carol Swartout Klein was so inspired by what she observed that she wrote a children’s book: *Painting for Peace in Ferguson*.

Its pages are filled with colorful images of hope that replaced the boarded-up windows. Klein uses photographs of the artwork to bear witness to peace. The book’s simple sentences focus children’s imaginations on hope rather than violence. Proceeds will go to helping the community flourish. It is one way the community is witnessing healing in the midst of division.

While most Brethren congregations may not be located in urban areas impacted by the high-profile cases of deadly force by police, Hosler does believe Brethren can have an impact on this nationwide conversation.

“I believe we can challenge the presumption of the effectiveness of violence and militarization of both our police forces and foreign policy,” he said. “These instances are not just a misuse of an otherwise neutral habit but part of a broader assumption that if we are really to be ‘effective’ we must rely on weapons.”

In other words, we are witnesses—just as Jesus declared in Luke’s resurrection story.

Breaking into the shuttered, fear-filled room where the disciples were hiding, Jesus challenges the disciples’ complicity. He empowers the disciples to be witnesses—even in places of fear. He sends them out with a story and a

mission, and promises them the gift of the Spirit’s power.

Naturally, as Luke reminds us, there was a mingling of both joy and apprehension. When Jesus appears, they think they’ve seen a ghost. They’re unsure of what to do. It’s unsettling. Luke puts it this way: “While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering.” But perhaps that is good news for those of us who are called to be witnesses today. We may be unsure of ourselves, and uncertain of what to say. Somehow it is comforting to know that the same was true for the earliest disciples. And if we think we are too small in number to make a difference, remember that it was just a handful of women and men who were commissioned by the risen Lord to be witnesses.

There were no body cameras, of course, but the witness of those who had encountered Jesus is compelling. In Acts, Luke tells us they persisted in demonstrating the truth of the resurrection. It all begins as Jesus says, “Peace.”

Then he gets down to business. He’s no ghost, he tells them. “I’m the real deal,” we might hear him say. To prove it he asks for something to eat. Jesus eats a fish—did you see that? A fish! Give the man something to eat! Resurrection is hard work, after all. Jesus shows them the marks of crucifixion, the scars of his torture. Step by step, Luke assembles what the early church will need for its testimony. He empowers them to be witnesses.

The scriptures have been fulfilled, and this small group of men and women are to be the ones God will use in continuing the mission. We can’t dismiss their testimony—and neither can we dismiss the witness of the things we have seen.

If we are to be witnesses to the peace that the resurrection brings, then we must speak out against violence and racism. Instances of racial bias in policing must compel the church to speak. We can support the important and hard work of the police in maintaining a safe and just society while also upholding the values of remaining innocent until proven guilty.

We are witnesses to these things. **W**

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

A series on a faith-based response to climate change

# Creating a climate for peace

by Sharon Yohn and Laura White

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9).*

**E**ncountering this familiar verse from **Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount**, how often are we guilty of unconsciously changing it to “Blessed are the peace lovers...?” Ah, if only loving peace and making peace were one and the same. Loving peace requires essentially no effort, no deep commitment, little reflection, hardly any discernment; anyone can do it—and most do. It is passive and uncontroversial.

*Making* peace, on the other hand, is an entirely different story. It demands active engagement, sustained dedication, careful analysis, patient relationship-building, and wise, prayerful discernment.

As we prayerfully consider how to work at promoting peace worldwide, advocating for a stable climate might not be the first thing that comes to mind. However, human-caused climate change is already contributing to violent conflict and will continue to do so more and more, if left unaddressed. While it would be too simplistic to say that climate change *causes* violent conflict, its effects are widely understood to contribute to instability. Rising sea levels, shrinking glaciers, diminished snowpack, and increased frequency and severity of droughts, storms, floods, and wildfires are making vital resources scarcer on many fronts.

Where resources are scarce, conflict over them becomes more likely, particularly when governmental controls are already weak, wealth inequality is high, or infrastructure for distributing resources is inadequate. When persons seek resources by leaving home and migrating to other regions, the pump is further primed for conflict. In short, as described

in the US Department of Defense’s Quadrennial Defense Review 2014, the wide-ranging effects of climate change are “threat multipliers that will aggravate stressors abroad such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and social tensions—conditions that can enable terrorist activity and other forms of violence.”

While these general assertions are widely accepted, the extent to which human-caused climate change is playing a part in any *particular* conflict is hard to pin down. To get a sense of why this is so, consider the role of performance-enhancing drugs in major-league baseball: The number of home runs being hit skyrocketed during the 1990s and early 2000s, and widespread steroid use is commonly acknowledged as the reason. That having been said, home run hitting didn’t begin with the steroid era, and certainly *some* home runs would have been hit during that period, independent of steroid use. Who’s to judge whether any *particular* home run happened specifically because of steroid use? Likewise, while it’s well documented that climate change is already increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and other extreme weather events, it’s hard to determine how much climate change contributed to any *particular* natural disaster. Furthermore, it’s challenging to figure out how much a particular natural disaster served as a trigger for a particular conflict.

Despite these difficulties, scientists have recently demonstrated a clear link between climate change and Syria’s civil war. Using statistical analysis and computer simulations, they have shown that human-caused climate change is making severe multi-year droughts two to three times more likely to occur in the region than they would naturally. Syria weathered such a record drought from 2007 to at least 2010 and the resulting massive crop failures spurred 1.5 million people to migrate from the rural north

to the cities. Government corruption, inequality, population growth, and poor water management worked in concert with the drought to set the stage for civil war.

The Arab Spring uprisings can also be linked to human-induced climate change, through a much less direct pathway. Research suggests that, because of rapid warming of the Arctic, the jet stream has become more susceptible to getting “blocked”—that is, stuck in a particular, unusual flow pattern for weeks at a time, setting the stage for extreme weather events.

In the summer of 2010, the jet stream over Asia became blocked and split in two. Cold air from Siberia was carried far to the south, where it collided over northern Pakistan with warm, moist air from the Bay of Bengal, “super-charging” the monsoon, submerging one-fifth of the nation’s land area, and directly affecting about 20 million people.

Meanwhile, over Russia, a hot, dry air mass stalled. The record-breaking heatwave and drought that ensued decimated agriculture and turned the landscape into a tinderbox; at least 7,000 wildfires raged across more than a million acres (a combined area larger than the state of Rhode Island). With a third of its nation’s wheat crop lost to these calamities, the Russian government felt compelled to ban wheat exports.

Further drought-related losses in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and China, combined with extreme rainfall-related losses in Canada and Australia, doubled the price of wheat on the world market between June 2010 and February 2011. Especially hard hit by this dramatic price spike were impoverished nations relying heavily on wheat imports—nine out of 10 of which are in the Middle East. As bread—a staple food in the region—became too expensive for many to afford, angry citizens took to

Nigeria—all nations with fragile governments that have suffered recently from intense drought and desertification made worse by climate change. The US military is concerned enough about these risks that it is already preparing for the impacts of climate change and advocating for reliable and renewable sources of energy. The Military Advisory Board report states bluntly, “The national security risks of projected climate change are as serious as any challenges we have faced.”

How, then, can we live out our call to be peacemakers amid all these intertwining challenges? It is hard to imagine how we could play a direct role in shoring up the political structures of fragile states or negotiating settlements among warring ethnic factions. By working to re-stabilize the global climate, however, we can wage peace indirectly—by helping to prevent further resource shortages and mass migrations that stress fragile states and cause ethnic tensions to flare and terrorism to flourish.

To help re-stabilize the climate, we can reduce our personal use of fossil fuels, and—perhaps more crucially—we can advocate for the United States to become a leader in greenhouse gas emission reductions. Reducing these emissions will require both improving energy efficiency (so that we waste less energy) and getting our energy in ways that don’t produce greenhouse gases. If we embrace these challenges wholeheartedly, we can be on the forefront of developing new technologies that will surely strengthen our economy. What’s more, we can help ensure that these new technologies are developed and implemented in ways that do not themselves promote conflict.

Making the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like solar and wind will pay other peace-making dividends beyond those associated with re-stabilizing

**“ It is hard to imagine how we could play a direct role in shoring up the political structures of fragile states or negotiating settlements among warring ethnic factions. ”**

the streets protesting government inaction and long-standing corruption and unemployment. While the role of climate change is harder to quantify here than for Syria, this example vividly illustrates how complex climate change’s effects can become in a globally interconnected world.

In addition to promoting civil wars, climate change also appears to be contributing to the rise of terrorist and extremist groups, as detailed in a 2014 report by the CNA Corporation Military Advisory Board entitled *National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change*. The document from this government-funded research organization composed of retired senior military commanders specifically describes the rise of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali, linking it to the southward spread of the Sahara desert. It goes on to highlight a pattern of similar growth of terrorist groups in Africa’s Sahel region, including Darfur, South Sudan, Niger, and

the climate. Wars over oil would be a thing of the past, and our nation’s foreign policy could reflect our deepest moral convictions instead of our basest needs for petroleum. Unlike fossil fuels, solar and wind energy are incredibly abundant and widely distributed around the globe. They can be harnessed at small, local scales at relatively low cost. Access to them cannot easily be cut off so they cannot readily be controlled by force and monopolized. Their widespread use can actually help promote equality and open the door for sustainable development, further creating a climate for peace. ❧

Sharon Yohn is assistant professor of chemistry at Juanita College in Huntingdon, Pa. Laura White is a small business owner and serves as the financial manager of the Huntingdon Farmers’ Market. She is especially involved in expanding access to the market for low-income community members. They are members of the Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., where they are co-leaders of an environmental awareness and stewardship group known as the Sustainability Circle.



# It will be all right (Part 1)

by Melody Keller

**D**o you have a bucket list of things that you would like to do? It may be reading a certain book, visiting an exotic location, starting a new business, or learning a language.

What about when you get to heaven? Do you have a bucket list of things that you would like to do there? I hope there is a chorus of Brethren saying, "I want to see Jesus!"

Your heaven bucket list could include seeing a child you carried but never met, catching up with a friend you lost to cancer, hugging grandparents, a spouse, a mother or father. Your list could continue.

There is a certain woman that I would like to talk to. Maybe we could walk streets of gold together, sit by a river, or take a break from the heavenly chorus to talk. I want to know this woman. She inspires me, though I have met her only through the pages of scripture. Her story is told in 2 Kings 4:8-37, and the lessons of her story should be inscribed in our hearts.

She lived in a place called Shunem, a city of Issachar.

We don't even know her name, just that she is a Shunamite woman. She lived with her husband, who was old. The scripture refers to her as a great woman. The Bible says that she was rich and influential, but all that influence and wealth could not give her what I suspect she had desperately wanted: a child. How long had they been married? We don't know. However, we do know that their arms were empty.

Read the story. Put yourself into their shoes. Then learn some lessons.

### **Lesson #1 – See the need and take action.**

Elisha was a man on the move, and this woman from Shunem noticed how often the holy man of God was passing by their house. She gave voice to an idea. Build a room for Elisha, and in the room place a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. Anytime that Elisha needed a place to stay, there would be one.

Her husband embraced her idea, because that's exactly what they did. They made a place for Elisha.

How often do we see a need and fail to do something constructive about it? The need may be in our homes, in our communities, in our churches, or maybe even in our own lives. We may think it is too time-consuming, too costly, or too difficult,

You may have held your own child, watching him fade away. And, with his last breath, part of your heart died, too. Maybe it was the unbelievable blessing of a wonderful marriage, followed by a war of words that left your heart wounded and

**She walked through that same doorway where she had received the news that she would bear a son. Imagine the pain she must have felt, . . . leaving part of her heart in that room.**

so we just sit on the sidelines and don't put forth the effort that is needed.

This couple jumped in with both feet—and a couple of hammers besides—and did what it took to supply a need. God likes that kind of initiative. Don't be lazy. Go order some lumber.

### **Lesson #2 – Dreams can live again.**

Elisha was so blessed by this woman's hospitality that he wanted to do something for her. Through his servant Gehazi, Elisha asked his hostess what he could do in return.

She was not in this for gain and didn't ask anything in return. Elisha still wasn't satisfied. After prying some more, he found out that this couple didn't have any children, and didn't have the possibility of having any because the husband was too old.

Through his servant, Elisha summoned her to his room. She stood in the doorway and heard Elisha say, "At this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son." A son? She didn't believe it. She didn't want the man of God to lie to her. But the promise had been made, and a seed of hope had been planted.

Imagine hearing the conversation between the woman and her husband. Maybe she took him to the same doorway and asked Elisha to repeat the promise.

How long had it been since this woman had dared to hope? How long had it been since she had returned the crib, boxed up the baby booties, or shut the door to the nursery?

Do you stand in a doorway of your own? What is it that you desire? Does it seem hopeless? Never to be? Listen to the promise, believe in the goodness of God, and let hope arise.

### **Lesson #3 – Run to your answer.**

"The woman conceived and bore a son at that season, in due time, as Elisha had declared to her" (2 Kings 4:17).

The joy of verse 17 is quickly dashed by the tragedy of verse 20, when this promised son dies. Imagine the anguish of that moment, the feeling of helplessness followed by the finality of death.

Are you able to put yourself into the shoes of this mother?

torn. Maybe it was a career that fit your talents and abilities. You loved it. You gave it your all—only to be handed a pink slip with no explanation why.

Where do you run when hope has slipped away? Where do you turn in the darkest storms? Where do you escape when you need a refuge?

This mother walked through the doorway of promise. She took her dead son and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door as she left. She walked through that same doorway where she had received the news that she would bear a son. Imagine the pain she must have felt leaving her son behind—even though he was dead—and shutting the door, leaving part of her heart in that room.

The Bible doesn't tell us that she informed her husband about the death of their child, but she did ask him for a servant and for a donkey so that she could go to the man of God.

Her husband didn't understand why his wife would make this trip on such a day, but the Shunammite woman merely responded, "It will be all right."

She was a mother on a mission. She instructed the driver not to restrain the donkeys unless she told him to. I can picture a quick departure, dust flying, hooves pounding, the passengers jostling, neighbors wondering.

The Shunammite's faith is on display as she charges down that road. If she could get to Elisha, things would be all right.

What a challenge to us.

Perhaps you have a dead dream or a dormant desire. Tragedy has stuck, trials abound, tears flow from tired eyes. Hope is hard to come by. Prayers don't seem to penetrate the ceiling. Fear is on every side.

I have a suggestion: Saddle up your donkey and drive. Go to the one who is your answer. Let your faith confront your fears. Hang on to hope and go to God—who already sees you coming! 

Melody Keller lives in Lewiston, Maine, and is a member of the Lewiston Church of the Brethren.



Shikhar Bhattarai/ACT Alliance/DCA

## Responding to the Nepal earthquake

**T**hrough the heartbreak of much destruction and death, Brethren Disaster Ministries is organizing a multilevel response to the Nepal earthquake, reported Roy Winter, associate executive director of

ACT Alliance, DanChurch Aid



Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries.

“We will work closely with Church World Service in providing immediate relief to the Nepalese people most impacted and most vulnerable to long-term poverty. Simultaneously Brethren Disaster Ministries will work with Heifer International to provide longer term recovery to some of the most at-risk groups.

“It is also important to build capacity in Nepalese organizations providing relief and recovery,” Winter said. “By working with these different groups, Brethren Disaster Ministries seeks to provide a more comprehensive and effective response to this crisis.”

Nepal was hit by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake on April 25 followed by a major aftershock May 12. Some 7,800 people have died and more than 15,000 have been injured according to official figures at press-time. The earthquake was centered less than 50 miles from the capital Kathmandu.

Donations are being received to support the Brethren Disaster Ministries response with ecumenical partners Church World Service (CWS), Heifer International, and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

A Nepal giving page has been created at Brethren.org to facilitate giving to the Brethren Disaster Ministries response. Gifts will help provide lifesaving emergency supplies and other critical assistance to earthquake survivors. Donations may be made online at [www.brethren.org/nepalrelief](http://www.brethren.org/nepalrelief) or by mailing checks payable to “Emergency Disaster Fund” and earmarked “Nepal earthquake” to Emergency Disaster Fund, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin IL 60120.



*Volunteers help distribute Toms Shoes to children in Honduras during the BVS Latin America retreat.*

## Brethren volunteers gather in Honduras

**Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) and Global Mission and Service workers** gathered for four days in late March at PANACAM Park in Cortes, Honduras, for a time of retreat. The group gathers once a year for reflection, devotion, and support.

This year's retreat, led by BVS director Dan McFadden, was held at Cerro Azul Meámbar National Park (PANACAM), which was established in 1987 and given to Project Global Village (PAG) to manage since 1992. Project Global Village is a community development agency started by Church of the Brethren member Chet Thomas. PAG manages this national park for the Honduran

National Parks Department. Its primary purpose is "Empowering families to reduce poverty, build just, peaceful, and productive communities based on Christian values."

During the retreat, the group participated in a shoe distribution of Toms Shoes, made possible through a "buy one give one" program. BVSers working at Emanuel Children's home and the other staff there regularly participate in the shoe distributions.

For more information about BVS go to [www.brethren.org/bvs](http://www.brethren.org/bvs). For information about the Global Mission and Service program go to [www.brethren.org/partners](http://www.brethren.org/partners).

## Foods Resource Bank receives annual Church of the Brethren contribution

**The Church of the Brethren through its Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF)** has contributed an annual gift of \$10,000 to the Foods Resource Bank (FRB). The contribution represents the payment of the denomination's 2015 commitment as an implementing member of FRB.

In related news, the Church of the Brethren representative on the FRB board, GFCF manager Jeff Boshart, will be leaving the FRB board. Taking his place as denominational representatives will be Jim Schmidt of Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, and Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service. Boshart will continue on the FRB Membership Support Committee, which is tasked with seeking out new members for FRB.

Boshart reports that in addition to a new partnership with World Relief, the FRB also has made a shift in its membership and board structure.

"Under the new structure," he reported, "all of our Brethren-related growing projects are now members of FRB in their own right, and not through the Global Food Crisis Fund and the denomination. The new board will have more representation from the growing projects and other new corporate and non-profit members." Boshart added, "FRB is reaching out to universities, agri-business, as well as other faith-based organizations."

Foods Resource Bank recently welcomed World Relief as a new partner in its work. The international relief and development agency joined FRB as an implementing organization. Some 15 other development agencies and hundreds of churches and volunteer groups work with FRB in growing solutions to hunger.

For more about the Global Food Crisis Fund go to [www.brethren.org/gfcf](http://www.brethren.org/gfcf).

## Upcoming events

**June 19 - 21**  
National Junior High Conference,  
Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

**July 9-11**  
CODE Meeting,  
Tampa, Fla.

**July 10-11**  
Ministers' Association Continuing Education Event,  
Tampa, Fla.

**July 11-15**  
Annual Conference,  
Tampa, Fla.

**July 15-16**  
BBT Board Meeting,  
Tampa, Fla.

**July 14-Aug. 3**  
BVS Summer Orientation

# Bethany event explores Anabaptism for today

**M**ore than 65 participants gathered at Bethany Theological Seminary

April 17-19 for a new event planned and hosted by the Institute for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults: “Anabaptism, the Next Generation.” Described as a learning forum for those in ministry with young adults, the event was open to and welcomed all who are interested in exploring the growing edges of Anabaptism among the generations.

The concept for the forum grew from the recognition that traditional Anabaptist values such as community, simplicity, service, and discipleship are becoming more appealing to young people in the church and even others who may be unaffiliated. Following suit, the format was modeled after contemporary TED Talks—a suggestion from conversations with Brethren young adults. Ideas and information were presented in 11 20-minute sessions, enabling each presenter to give specificity to a single topic.

Courtesy of Bethany Theological Seminary



**Chuck Bomar and Dana Cassell lead a discussion group.**

Courtesy of Bethany Theological Seminary



**Laura Stone leads a discussion on music as an expression of faith.**

Ecumenical speakers Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Chuck Bomar gave voice to the themes of the forum from outside Anabaptist circles.

Wilson-Hartgrove, spiritual author and speaker, founded the School of Conversion, which builds community among the disadvantaged through prison reform, and in community-based education. Bomar is a writer and pastor with leadership experience in college ministry and founder of iampeople, empowering volunteers to serve others in their communities. They were joined by Brethren speakers Josh Brockway, Dana Cassell, Laura Stone, and Dennis Webb, and by Jeff Carter, Steve Schweitzer, Tara Hornbacker, and Russell Haitch from the Bethany faculty and staff.

Haitch, a Bethany professor, is director of the Institute. “There’s talk of young adults leaving the church, but here they were leading the church,” he said in appreciation for those gathered. “It was a vibrant, intergenerational gathering. People expressed deep interest in Anabaptist heritage but an even deeper desire to see convictions lived

Courtesy of Bethany Theological Seminary



**Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove**

out in community forming, socially transforming ways today.”

Topics ranged from the intersection of Anabaptism with scripture and spirituality to multiculturalism and expressing faith through music. Presenters also led small discussion groups on these and other topics of interest.

Jenny Williams is director of Communications and Alumni/ae Relations for Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.



*Mission 21 director Claudia Bandixen and Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger sign a memorandum of understanding for continuing cooperation with EYN in Nigeria, to carry out crisis response cooperatively. Mission 21 has been a longterm partner with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria and the Church of the Brethren mission in Nigeria since 1950.*

## Mission 21 and Church of the Brethren sign MOU for cooperative work with EYN in Nigeria

**M**ission 21, a long-standing partner of the Church of the Brethren mission in Nigeria and of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), has signed a memorandum of understanding about continuing cooperation in the Nigeria Crisis Response.

Mission 21 director Claudia Bandixen visited the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., on April 2 to sign the document and to hold meetings with general secretary Stan Noffsinger, Global Mission and Service executive director Jay Witmeyer, and Nigeria Crisis Response co-directors Carl and Roxane Hill.

Formerly known as Basel Mission, Mission 21 is based in Switzerland. Begun in 1815, it served as an independent Christian mission society. Currently it is active in 21 nations, and several European Christian denominations are taking part. The organization started work in Nigeria several decades ago, and in 1950 it became a partner with the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria and with EYN. At that time, Mission 21's traditional areas of service in northeastern Nigeria were joined with the rest of the church body of EYN.

Mission 21's focus is faith-based development work, Bandixen ex-

plained in an interview after the MOU was signed. The group's four "legs" are work on health, poverty, education, and peace. In Nigeria, Mission 21 has focused on education and health care in cooperation with EYN. One of its projects dealt with HIV/AIDS in northeast Nigeria.

The understanding of Mission 21, Bandixen said, is that evangelism and church planting are the responsibility of church partners such as EYN, and that the responsibility of the mission is development. The mission welcomes the way Christian communities of faith tend to grow up in areas where it is active, but Mission 21's goal is not to plant new churches or to recreate the European churches that support it.

Mission 21's work in Nigeria began in the community of Gava, and its traditional area of work in northeastern Nigeria also has included Gwoza--the first town that was overrun and claimed by the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency. In recent weeks, however, the Nigeria army and military forces from neighboring countries have been pushing Boko Haram out of those areas. Because of the violence in Nigeria in recent years, Mission 21 has not had placed employees there since 2010, Bandixen said.

She noted several aspects to the agreement that are important to Mission 21, especially a focus on joint

advocacy for Nigeria and for other places around the world where violence results from religious fanaticism, and where such violence is directed specifically at women and girls.

Mission 21 already is in the midst of creating an advocacy campaign, Bandixen said. The campaign will have a political component but also will include liturgical materials suitable for worship services as well as an invitation for Christians to make a personal commitment to join in. Mission 21 will be translating campaign materials into English in order to share them with the Church of the Brethren, she said.

In regard to how Mission 21 will engage the cooperative work in Nigeria, Bandixen said the organization must first send an expert to Nigeria to carry out an assessment of the situation and the needs, and then the organization will be considering next steps.

The agreement that was signed resolves to work in ecumenical partnership toward mutual mission, development projects, and relief work in Nigeria, creating a three-way partnership between the Church of the Brethren, Mission 21, and EYN, as all three work to address the ongoing Nigerian crisis.

For more about the Nigeria Crisis Response go to [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis).

# Enjoy God's bounty

**T**here are not many things more satisfying than picking produce off the vine or digging it out of the dirt and eating it still warm from the sun. Second to that (for me) would have to be grilling. When the goods are that fresh, minimal preparation is the key to serving up the simplest, most beautiful meal.



MANDY GARCIA

Now that evenings are getting longer, front porches and back patios all over the country are calling to be filled with friends, family, and food. So here's to changing seasons! This calls for a celebration of new life, love, and the bounty that comes from a generous Creator and a fertile earth. Soak in its beauty, give thanks for how its fruit nourishes our bodies and souls. Bless the hands that grow the food and those that

prepare it. And then, dear reader, eat and be filled, satisfied by the knowing that you are precious in the eyes of your Maker.

Taste. Savor. See. Know that God is good.

It's still early in the season, but this is the perfect time to take advantage of springtime produce that's available only through the early weeks of summer. Here are some of the easiest ways to enjoy these delicacies on their own, or all together for a complete meal. The best part is that they are all simple enough for a weeknight, and delicious enough for a dinner party. 

Mandy Garcia is a freelance writer living in Elgin, Ill.



## Springtime supper menu

### **Appetizer—Radishes**

Spread butter on toasted slices of french bread or on crackers of your choice. Top with thinly sliced radishes and a touch of salt. Serve with iced sun tea while the rest of dinner is grilling.

### **Starch—New potatoes**

Cut potatoes into bite-size pieces. Toss in olive oil and plenty of salt, pepper, and dried oregano. Spread in a single layer on a sheet of aluminum foil and top with a sprinkle of shredded parmesan cheese and fresh chives. Cover with another sheet of foil and pinch closed. Nestle packet directly into the side of a pile of hot coals in the grill (or place on top of a hot grill grate).

### **Vegetable—Asparagus**

Wash asparagus stalks and trim the bottoms. Toss in a drizzle of olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place directly on a hot, clean grill grate until caramelized but still a bit crunchy.

### **Main—Shrimp**

Mix together 8 oz. of Italian salad dressing, 8 oz. of honey, and 1/2 tsp. minced garlic. Place 2 pounds of uncooked shrimp (peeled and deveined) in a sealable container and cover with marinade. Allow to marinate for 30 minutes. Skewer shrimp and cook on hot grill grates until opaque—about three minutes each side.

### **Dessert—Strawberries**

Wash and trim berries. Cut into bite-size pieces. Sprinkle with sugar and allow to sit for 10 minutes until juices run and berries are slightly macerated. Top with freshly shredded basil leaves. Serve as is, or spoon on top of whipped cream, shortcake, or ice cream.

# Mister Rogers' quiet peace witness

**W**hen you conjure memories of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*, you probably aren't thinking about the bold political and social statements that were made in many of the programs. But Fred Rogers, in his signature cardigan, was one of the most radical pacifists of modern history.



E.A. HARVEY

In his new book, *Peaceful Neighbor: Discovering the Countercultural Mister Rogers*, Michael Long, associate professor of religious studies and director of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College's peace and conflict studies program, explores a side of Fred Rogers that most don't consider.

"I wondered what his vision of peace looked like," said Long, "so I went to the Fred Rogers Archive in Latrobe, out near Pittsburgh, and went through his emails,

his sermons, his papers. . . ." What Long found was an undeniable correlation between significant historical events and the theme of Rogers' shows.

If you place the programs in their historical context, Long said, you can see that at volatile times Rogers did not run away but instead dealt with war and peace, racial politics, economic injustice, gender equality, vegetarianism, ecological ethics, and the environment.

To most viewers, the show offered simple, wise counsel about caring for one another and treating people with dignity; however, there were deeper purposes behind his stories. "His mission, which wasn't so obvious, was to make peacemakers out of his audience," said Long. "If we connect the program to its historical context we can see that it's a sharp political response to a society poised to kill. He was deeply political."

Rogers, from Latrobe, Pa., first appeared on WQED in Pittsburgh, but on Feb. 19, 1968, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* went national on public television. In the first week, he ran an anti-war series; the program continued to air through 2001, two years before Rogers died.

Rogers' vision of peace was not just the absence of war; it also was about love and compassion—and not just for people,

but also for animals. In the early 1970s Rogers became a vegetarian. "He said he could never eat anything that had a mother," Long said. When his programs showed people eating in restaurants, there was no meat in the scenes.

"He also had a beautiful ecological ethic," Long said. He would go out on a boat and ask the audience how they would feel if they were fish. "Would you want people dumping things in your home?" he'd ask.

One of his shows featured Rogers visiting killer whale Shamu. When a rerun of the show ran soon after the release of the movie *Free Willy*, Rogers got angry letters from children asking him why he didn't release Shamu. On another show, Rogers had a visit from Margaret Hamilton, the actress who played the Wicked Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*. Rogers mentioned in the show that witches aren't real, which led to reactions from the Wiccan community.

During the "white flight" of the late 1960s, in which whites began to leave racially mixed urban regions, Rogers featured a show in which he invited African Americans into his home and also visited theirs. "He was staking out a position with Martin Luther King," said Long. "He was a racial integrationist." Not long after the riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Rogers brought a black police officer character to his show which, said Long, "showed glimpses of progressive racial politics."

As an ordained Presbyterian minister, Rogers saw part of his mission as showing parables. "He had a sense that Jesus was a Prince of Peace," Long said. "He wanted his followers to take up virtues of peacemaking." Rogers, however, was asked to not talk about faith on the show.

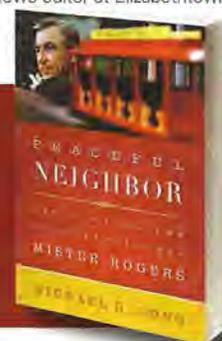
Rogers earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, which recognized his contribution to the well-being of children, and a career in public television that demonstrated the importance of kindness, compassion, and learning.

"He tried to change the hearts of people, not the just the politics of federal government," Long said of Rogers' quiet pacifism. "He tried to make children into peacemakers at an early age." 

E.A. (Elizabeth) Harvey is communications manager and news editor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *Peaceful Neighbor: Discovering the Countercultural Mister Rogers*. **Author:** Michael G. Long. **Publisher:** Westminster John Knox Press, March 13, 2015. **Number of pages:** 176. **Price:** \$17. "Long makes it clear . . . that Rogers was always hesitant to make a message so loud that it might alienate the children watching his show," says David Marshall in a review at theologues.com, "but this did not stop him from taking various presidents to task for their warmongering ways. His was one of the first television shows to confront societal standards in regards to race, gender, and sexual orientation."



## Thanks for wonderful articles

Thanks to Jennifer Hosler for her wonderful article, “A church for everybody” (May 2015 MESSENGER). Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren is doing awesome work.

Thanks also to Guy Wampler for his article in the same issue: “Where is the Prince of Peace?” Wampler referenced the book by Musa Mambula, *Are There Limits to Pacifism? The Nigerian Dilemma*. The book had sold out by the time I tried to order it from Brethren Press last year. I hope it will become available again. Speaking of books, I can recommend another one that is available from Brethren Press, although not published by Brethren Press: Kate Eisenbise

Crell’s *Cooperative Salvation: a Brethren View of Atonement* (2014). The book is like a mini-theology course on the subject of soteriology, but it’s written in a concise, interesting, compare-and-contrast manner.

**Charles Thomas**  
Murfreesboro, Tenn..

## Regarding idols in the sky

Would it go beyond the pale to ask if our president is a war criminal? According to the blog “Pray for US,” as of March 18, 2013, President Obama had killed 204 children by drone attacks. [See April MESSENGER article on drones.] On average, Obama killed one

child every other day in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.

One example of Obama’s wanton and reckless killing of children and civilians occurred on Dec. 17, 2009, in Al Majata, Yemen, where 44 civilians including 22 children between the ages of 1 and 17 were killed as reported by the Yemeni government. In this attack the US was able to confirm the death of only one terrorist, and he was not the one they were looking for. Among the dead were the Louqye children, including six daughters aged 1 to 15, and at least two sons ages 4 and 13. Also killed were the Nassar children, including five daughters aged 2 to 9. Besides the deaths of these children, five of the dead women were pregnant. Entire families have

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been wiped out in strikes authorized by Barack Obama.

A final note in the "Pray for US" blog: "We are not at war with Yemen, Pakistan or Somalia. It is illegal for Barack Obama to be carrying out drone strikes in these nations. These acts are war crimes, plain and simple and deserving of prosecution and punishment."

**Daniel Riehl**  
Lititz, Pa.

### I laughed out loud!

Wendy McFadden's April "From the publisher" column was the first one to actually make me laugh out loud! As a long-time librarian about to retire, and a person who has a houseful of books, I really enjoyed

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the image of coming home to find a “thief”—or maybe even several of them—sprawled out on the floor, the easy chairs, and the couches, all avidly reading our books. What a great vision! I’m glad that there’s still some wit to be had in the Church of the Brethren General Offices.

**Sylvia Eller Wolfe**  
San Marcos, Calif.

## Resorting to name-calling

I have noticed with interest that the last two issues of MESSENGER have included two letters on so called man-made climate change. I notice that in all the strong statements that are made there are no references to studies, specific scientists, or other tests. Even the paper presented last year had no references, but only passionate wording declaring the demise soon to befall the world.

Rather than cite any evidence, these letters have focused on those speaking from facts as “having an axe to grind” (this letter mentioned my name) and in the most recent letter “false prophets.” I find it interesting that when you can’t come up with conclusive evidence you must resort to name-calling.

Let me reference someone who knows much more than I on climate change. Leslie Woodcock of the University of Manchester’s School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science, and a former NASA researcher, explains:

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*Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or email [messenger@brethren.org](mailto:messenger@brethren.org). Please include hometown and phone number.*

*Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.*

“The theory of ‘man-made climate change’ is an unsubstantiated hypothesis—water is a much more powerful greenhouse gas and there is 20 times more of it in our atmosphere (around one per cent of the atmosphere) whereas CO<sub>2</sub> is only 0.04%—Carbon dioxide has been made out to be some kind of toxic gas, but the truth is it’s the gas of life. We breath it out, plants breath it in.

The green lobby has created a do-good industry and it becomes a way of life, like a religion” (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, April 3, 2014).

When we speak on climate change, shouldn’t we focus more on the issue rather than on those who are speaking to the issue?

**Randy Cosner**  
Dayton, Va.

## CLASSIFIEDS

**Have you always wanted to work in a bookstore?** Brethren Press is looking for volunteers to assist in set-up, operation, and tear-down of the Annual Conference Bookstore in Tampa, Florida. If you have interest and time to volunteer, contact James Deaton at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120 or [jdeaton@brethren.org](mailto:jdeaton@brethren.org).

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## New Members

**Bakersfield, Calif.:** Roberto Sebastian Gutierrez, Jasmine Gutierrez, Dean Davis, Danielle Davis, Judy Mitchell, Nicole Matthias, Danielle Matthias, Landen Nickell, Rosie Hernandez, Sandra Millard, Monique Potter, Andreas Bockover, Nickolas Jump

**Beachdale, Berlin, Pa.:** Olivia Vaughn

**Bedford, Pa.:** Gene Redinger, Amelia Rose

**Berkey, Windber, Pa.:** Joan McCann, Rich McCann, Austin Custer, Haley Felan, Barb Shaffer

**Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.:** Darlene Penrod, Shania Wilson, Zoanna Wilson, James Michael Hipkins, Jackson Walter Hipkins, Mary Foster

**Chiques, Manheim, Pa.:** Goldie Gibble

**Easton, Md.:** Heather McGee, Lukas McGee

**Elizabethtown, Pa.:** Mark Clapper, Michelle Clapper, Anna DeGoede, Phyllis Hamme, Jaynie Korzi, Kris Korzi, Mark Kraenbring, Naomi Kraenbring, Bekah Miller, Kathy Nornhold, Rich Nornhold, Karen Ungemach

**Faith Community, New Oxford, Pa.:** Marilee Sackett, Darrell Howe, Jean Howe

**Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.:** Naaman Miller, Clara Miller

**Hagerstown, Md.:** Joe Poteet, Tracie Poteet, Teri Rhoderick, John Miller, Carol Miller, Mark Cubbage, Madonna Beverlin Hershman, Adam Rudy, Kenny Williams

**La Verne, Calif.:** Sarah Innerst-Peterson, Carolyn Smith, Kirk Smith, Cory Townsend, Cassidy Gates, Todd Potter, Amanda Potter

**Lititz, Pa.:** Rachel Brumbach, David Krak, Alice De-

Sieghardt, Audrey Myer, Amanda Stauffer Nace, Bryan Seese, Henrietta Seese, John Ulshoefer, Jan Ulshoefer, Ray Belliveau, Sandra Belliveau, John Strogus, Sandra Strogus, Richard Griswold, Norma Griswold, Robert Bender, Aileen Bender, Sarah Challenger

**Mechanicsburg, Pa.:** Jill Risser, Starr Akens, Phyllis Erway, Lawrence Garner, Elizabeth Henry

**Modesto, Calif.:** Shelby Clarke, Travis Clarke, Beverly Jefferies, Roland Johnson, Alice Melton, Liz Woods

**Mohrsville, Pa.:** Jim Bender, Pat Bender, Jon Bender, Deb Bender

**Nokesville, Va.:** Stacy Mayhugh, Mark Tinsman, Lois Tinsman, Naam Sheakley, Clark Sheakley, Joseph Rother, Luke Sheakley, Gavin Yohn

**Osage, McCune, Kan.:** Nicholas Copenhaver, Adam Lee, Kamryn Huffaker, Matthew Martinie, Norma Jean LeMar

**Palmyra, Pa.:** Vera Freed, Karen Meads

**Philadelphia, First, Wyncmoor, Pa.:** Naomi Hall, Eli Hall

**Reading, Homeworth, Ohio:** Thomas Latham, Kay Latham

**Rossville, Ind.:** Jonathan Finley, Karen Seabolt

**Sangerville, Bridgewater, Va.:** Emily Daggett, Kate-lynn Daggett, Kayla Fifer, Lauren Fifer, Evan Simmons, Payton Simmons, Tanner Simmons

**Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.:** Judy Kimemia, Leah Hopewell, Frances Leffler, Kenneth Leffler, Rodney Keefer, Craig Fasnacht

**Westernport, Md.:** Kathy Murphy, Rob Tetric, Terry Apple

## Anniversaries

**Albaugh, Ira and Doris, Westminster, Md., 60**

**Anthony, Robert and Carol, Pottstown, Pa., 50**

**Berkey, Irvin and Hazel, Windber, Pa., 65**

**Betterly, Sheldon and Peggy, Nokesville, Va., 60**

**Boeger, Mike and Sandi, Gridley, Calif., 50**

**Bowers, Arthur Jack and Mildred, Keedysville, Md., 60**

**Brubaker, John Henry and Orlena, Lititz, Pa., 75**

**Clem, Richard and Gloria, Hagerstown, Md., 55**

**Coffey, Walter and Peggy, Bridgewater, Va., 55**

**Craig, Joe and Sherry, Hagerstown, Md., 50**

**Diehl, Dick and Connie, Uniontown, Pa., 60**

**Fitzkee, Dan and Floy, Manheim, Pa., 55**

**Hauger, Hilton and Esther, Garrett, Pa., 50**

**Hoover, John and Janet, Glenside, Pa., 70**

**Kidwell, James and Esther, Knoxville, Md., 50**

**Kontra, Peter and Ruthanne, Palmyra, Pa., 50**

**Kurtz, Paul and Mary, Lititz, Pa., 66**

**Ledgerwood, Olin and Helen, Uniontown, Ohio, 65**

**Lehman, Elmer and Margaret, Salem, Ohio, 71**

**Leonard, Amos and Sharon, McCune, Kan., 50**

**Lutz, Ron and Ila, Ambler, Pa., 55**

**Miller, Paul and Patricia, Harrisburg, Pa., 60**

**O'Shea, Chuck and Helen, Bedford, Pa., 50**

**Reinhard, Gerhard and Lois, Bethel, Pa., 50**

**Reisinger, Erni and Alma, Elizabethtown, Pa., 60**

**Shaffer, Lindall and Dolores, New Waterford, Ohio, 60**

**Shenk, Galen and Nancy, Elizabethtown, Pa., 55**

**Shive, Art and Janet, Harleysville, Pa., 50**

**Shrum, William and Nancy, Woodstock, Va., 50**

**Stauffer, Guy and Ruth, Bradenton, Fla., 70**

**Stevens, Owen and Marian, Davidsville, Pa., 69**

**Stutzman, Clifford and Sally, Hollsopple, Pa., 65**

**Wanner, Ralph and Beryl, Womelsdorf, Pa., 50**

**Weybright, William and Susan, Goshen, Ind., 55**

**Wolf, Irvin and Sylvia, Quinter, Kan., 62**

## Deaths

**Baile, Virginia Mae Sittig, 91, New Oxford, Pa., March 7**

**Baker, Valley P., 94, Weyers Cave, Va., March 24**

**Barber, Bessie Viola Redding, 89, Westminster, Md., March 15**

**Barto, Willabelle Dee, 84, Bear Lake, Mich., Jan. 11**

**Beachler, Virgil Dorine Tombaugh, 99, Hillsdale, Mich., April 12**

**Becker, Garth D., 83, Lititz, Pa., March 25**

**Bitterman, Wilma E. Piehler, 86, Middletown, Pa., March 29**

**Blahnik, M. Joyce, 84, Peoria, Ill., March 26**

**Bockes, Anna Belle Coleman, 76, Berlin, Pa., Feb. 15**

**Boyer, Anna Mae Adams, 79, Kittanning, Pa., March 25**

**Brown, Sallie Lee, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., March 24**

**Brubaker, Ann F. Longenecker, 94, Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 21**

**Brubaker, Dwayne La Verne, 89, McPherson, Kan., Aug. 9, 2014**

**Brubaker, H. Dale, 98, Muncie, Ind., July 1, 2014**

**Byers, Orville Gardner, 90, Mount Sidney, Va., Feb. 6**

**Callas, Evelyn Ladoucer, 77, Perrysburg, Ohio, April 3**

**Caricofe, Edith Virginia, 96, Dayton, Va., March 20**

**Carter, Marie Catherine Lam, 88, Wapakoneta, Ohio, Feb. 6**

**Chappelle, David A., 81, Roaring Spring, Pa., April 9**

**Charls, Cecil M., 94, Prairie City, Iowa, March 25**

**Cook, Bette Mae Paul, 91, Portage, Pa., March 11**

**Cripe, Ruth Johnson, 102, Ashland, Ohio, March 13**

**Deem, Ruth I. Arford, 94, East Freedom, Pa., March 28**

**Diener, Barbara A. Ruth, 73, Mount Joy, Pa., March 15**

**Domer, Dale E., 84, Hartsville, Ohio, Dec. 30**

**Erisman, Kathryn Leona Valencourt, 85, Warrensburg, Mo., April 26**

**Faidley, Linda J., 65, Windber, Pa., Aug. 13**

**Forsyth, Evelyn Marie Ranson, 92, Mount Morris, Ill., April 11**

**Garver, Kenneth K., 95, North Lima, Ohio, April 11**

**Gerber, Linda K. Workman, 71, Hanover, Pa., March 19**

**Godfrey, Doris E. Keeny, 84, Seven Valleys, Pa., April 8**

**Good, Hazel Shifflett, 76, Grottoes, Va., March 6**

**Graham, Bernetta Lechrone, 92, Lancaster, Pa., March 18**

**Green, Charles Walter, 96, Fairplay, Md., April 12**

**Grove, Carolyn Flo, 70, Waynesboro, Va., March 21**

**Grove, Ruth Bryant, 92, Waynesboro, Va., April 8**

**Harding, Rebecca Meckel, 57, Luray, Va., May 3**

**Heinlen, Roy Eugene, Jr., 61, Blue Ridge, Va., April 9**

**Hemminger, Jerry D., 86, Goshen, Ind., March 27**

**Huff, Paul Kenneth, 96, McCune, Kan., July 6, 2014**

**Jones, Richard H., 84, Johnstown, Pa., March 22, 2014**

**Ladd, Doris Alene Baker, 99, Bakersfield, Calif., July 29, 2014**

**Thomas, Kathryn Leventry, 87, Hollsopple, Pa., June 6, 2014**

**Wentz, Frances Irene Fuhrman, 89, East Berlin, Pa., May 31, 2014**

## Licensings

**Good, Jason, Atl. N.E. Dist. (East Cocalico, Stevens, Pa.), April 12**

**Kelley, Michael, Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Rockford Community, Rockford, Ill.), March 29**

**Knically, LaDawn, Shen. Dist. (Beaver Creek, Bridgewater, Va.), April 19**

**Koontz, Gary, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.), March 29**

**Lohr, Cecil M., W. Pa. Dist. (Sipesville, Pa.), Jan. 4**

**Spaulding, Spencer, S/C Ind. Dist. (Anderson, Ind.), April 26**

**Stewart, W. David, Shen. Dist. (Forest Chapel, Crimora, Va.), May 3**

## Ordinations

**Fike, Carl R., W. Marva Dist. (Oak Park, Oakland, Md.), April 19**

**Miller, Neill M., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Pleasant Ridge, Needmore, Pa.), March 15**

## Placements

**Bishop, Darren, plural ministry team, Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa., Dec. 7**

**Daggett, Kevin W., from pastor, Sangerville, Bridgewater, Va., to pastor, Dayton, Va., April 20**

**Devor, Randy, pastor, Myerstown, Pa., April 13**

**Herbert, Frank, from interim to pastor, Saving Grace, North Fort Myers, Fla., Sept. 28**

**Ulm, David, from pastor, Mount Zion Road, Lebanon, Pa., to pastor, Woodbury, Pa., April 15**

# Brethren step up

**T**his editorial's title is not a request. It's an observation. As in, when something needs doing, Brethren step up to the plate and get it done. (Grammarians will note that, if it were a request, there would be a comma after the word "Brethren.")



**RANDY MILLER**  
MESSENGER EDITOR

As I scan congregational and district newsletters for information about what's going on around the denomination, I am struck by just how busy we Brethren are and by how much we Brethren continue to give when there is need in the world. When I read *Newsline*, posted weekly at brethren.org, I marvel at how productive and generous this relatively small denomination is.

It's good for us to be reminded of this, especially these days, as we become increasingly aware of our denomination's declining membership and the reduction in giving to certain areas. We are reminded of those unhappy statistics often enough—even in the pages of this magazine. Just last month, Brethren pastor Galen Hackman pointed out this "elephant in the room" in MESSENGER's Reflections page. In that column he claimed that we need to face this trend rather than turn our backs to it just because it may be unpleasant to think about. He's right. At the same time, in spite of our dwindling numbers, Brethren continue to do amazing acts of service, justice, and kindness.

Last year, the Mission and Ministry Board began the Nigeria Crisis Fund to assist the thousands of Nigerian Brethren whose lives have been devastated by Boko Haram. In a letter to congregations across the denomination, general secretary Stan Noffsinger wrote, "The fact of Brethren responding to human tragedy has not been changed by the passing of years." Comparing the current Nigeria Crisis Response to the response of the church to the Armenian genocide 100 years ago, he added, "In October 2014, the board committed \$1.5 million dollars (\$1 million from denominational assets and \$500,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund) to start the relief effort in Nigeria. In the months since, individuals and congregations have given over \$1 million to the Nigeria Crisis Fund, with gifts continuing to come in."

What is so impressive is that, in addition to the \$1.5 million already designated for Nigeria relief, Brethren contributed another \$1 million from their own pockets in less than a year. Membership in the denomination in the US and Puerto Rico is around 100,000 today—some 15,000 fewer than it was a century ago. And yet, despite the passage of time, the Brethren desire to help those in need in tangible ways has not waned.

I bring this up not to shower us with praise (we Brethren have a tendency to shy away from that kind of thing, anyway), but to remind us that, even as we fret over our collective future, our heart for service, compassion, and goodwill is still beating strong.

Of course, it's not just in our giving to needs overseas that these traits can be seen. Brethren give generously not only of

**Brethren give generously not only of their funds, but also of their time and energy. And you don't have to go half-way around the world to see it.**

Take a look back a century ago in Brethren history for a moment. On April 24, 1915, the killing of more than 1,500,000 Armenians began at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. In 1917, when Brethren learned about these killings, they went outside of existing guidelines for giving to those in foreign lands and decided to provide emergency funding and support for those affected. At the time, there were some 115,000 members in the Church of the Brethren. Over a four-year period, from 1917 to 1921, the denomination contributed \$267,000 in assistance. In today's figures, that would be around \$4.98 million.

their funds, but also of their time and energy. And you don't have to go half-way around the world to see it. It occurs quietly and humbly in church kitchens, fellowship halls, district gatherings, surrounding communities, and in flooded or tornado-ravaged cities.

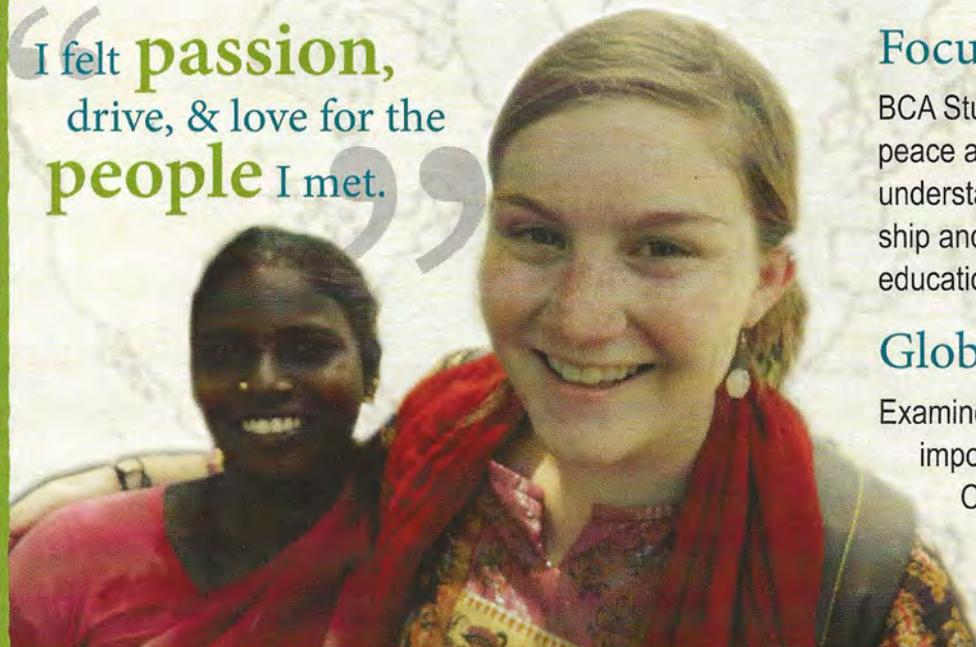
Brethren don't need to be reminded to step up to the plate when needs arise. It's simply what we do. It's part of a tradition of service to neighbors near and far that we inherited, and one which we are honored to continue, no matter how many of us there may be. **ZU**

**COMING IN JULY/AUGUST:** Profile of Annual Conference moderator David Steele

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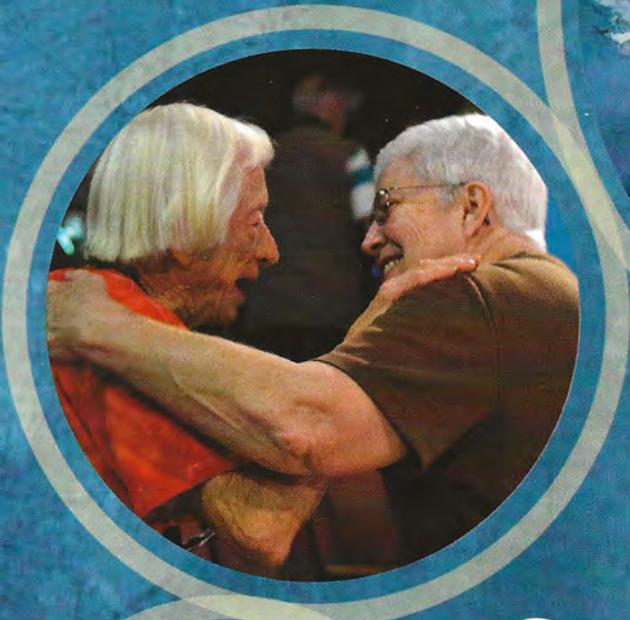
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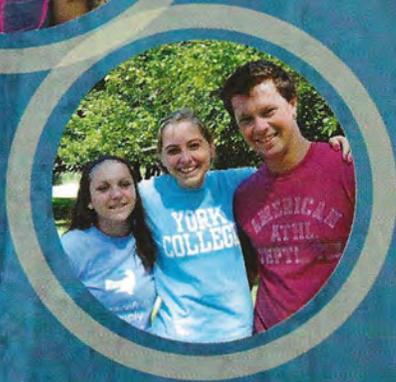
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