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SEPTEMBER 2015 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Bearing fruit in *Tampa*



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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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**on the cover** The Nigerian Women's Fellowship Choir brought laughter, tears, and powerful voices to Annual Conference in Tampa this summer. Photo by Glenn Riegel

## 8 Bearing fruit in Tampa—Annual Conference 2015

With layered harmonies and beaming faces, the EYN Women's Fellowship Choir expressed in song and celebration the mood of this year's Annual Conference in Tampa, Fla. As part of the large contingent of Nigerian Brethren attending the event, they took center stage in more ways than one, and gave voice to the spirit of fellowship, gratitude, unity, and hope that enveloped the week.

## 14 Samuel Dali discusses EYN's future

With a note of cautious optimism about what lies ahead for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), EYN president Samuel Dali spoke with MESSENGER at Annual Conference.

## 15 Creating a climate for new life

Fossil fuels have had a good long run, bringing us the ability to grow food with less backbreaking labor, to heat and cool our homes with ease, and to travel the world in comfort and safety. But, as Ecclesiastes reminds us, to everything there is a season, and it's time for fossil fuel's season to end. But plenty of viable alternatives are available and being implemented today—ones that allow us care even more effectively for creation.

## 18 Bible study: Let your light shine

In many ways—with trials and tribulations all around us—it feels like nighttime in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. But is there hope? Praise God, that answer is yes! God's light shines—especially in the night.

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## **T**here's an odd melancholy in the hours after everyone leaves Annual Conference.

The convention center echoes. The hall that had been set up for worship and business is raw space once again, with empty boxes and trash the only evidence of our presence. This space used to be ours, but now we are out of place. For a week we were at home, but we don't belong here anymore.



**WENDY MCFADDEN**  
PUBLISHER

Belonging is about both time and space. When we belong, we belong somewhere. We also belong for a time. At Annual Conference, arriving early is fine. At that stage we are explorers, scouting out the new and keeping a lookout for friends. But the departure is different. When we stay longer, we are displaced. It's like that final walk through the just-sold home, or a visit to the old school.

Or like remembering how church used to be: When activities at church were the center of family life. When the parking lot and the pews were so full that there was talk of a new building. When the pastor was full-time. Sometimes the feeling is nostalgia, but sometimes it's more than that. We feel most bereft when we have belonged somewhere for a long time.

The reality has practical issues: How to downsize staffing and expectations. What to do when it's no longer possible to maintain the building. How to share the work when the number of leaders is smaller and energy flags. How to do church in a world that doesn't value church anymore.

Many congregations know this situation too well, and the ripples expand to districts and to the Church of the Brethren as a whole. When delegates in Tampa discussed a query that asked the denomination to examine the structure of our districts, they decided eventually to reshape the task into studying the vitality of the church. Did this dilute the question, postponing the urgent needs of districts that are too small to be viable? Or did it place the question of structure more properly within a larger context? That was the debate.

The Church of the Brethren is not the only denomination faced with questions of vitality and viability. Many churches are feeling out of place—left in a place that no longer seems familiar or that time has left behind. Do we belong anymore?

Fortunately, there's another dimension beyond place and time: To *whom* we belong. We do not know the future, but we know who holds the future. May the God of past, present, and future lead us forward.

*Wendy McFadden*

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courtesy of Black Rock Church of the Brethren



*Black Rock Church of the Brethren in Glenville, Pa., designated proceeds from its third annual Spring Fair on May 9 to the food pantry of Lazarus United Church of Christ in Lineboro, Md. Shown here: (standing, from left) Donna Hanke, Alma Shaffer, Helen Geisler, Jen Hanke, Jan Croasmun (Black Rock representative), Samantha Dickmyer, Sophia Dickmyer, Helen Warner, Sara Dickmyer; (seated) pastor Sam Chamelin, pastor David Miller.*

**Congregation Close-Up**

## Busy Brethren at Black Rock

**B**lack Rock Church of the Brethren in Glenville, Pa., designated proceeds from its third annual Spring Fair on May 9 to the food pantry of Lazarus United Church of Christ in Lineboro, Md. Lazarus church started a food pantry for needy families several years ago. After the Lazarus church building burned down in 2013, the congregation continued to operate the food pantry out of a mobile classroom donated by another church. The food pantry relies on donations from individuals, groups, and local businesses, providing bags of groceries to families on the third Saturday of each month. A check for \$1,965.52 was presented to Lazarus pastor Sam Chamelin by Black Rock pastor David Miller on Sunday, June 7, in the food pantry facility, with several pantry volunteers and the chair of the Spring Fair present. The two churches have a history of uniting for special activities and events.

Not content to let the adults have all the fun, children from the Black Rock church designated the offering from their 2015 vacation Bible school to the Church of the Brethren Haiti Medical Project. "Over four days, June 22-25, 30 children contributed more than \$300," said pastor David Miller. "This will be added to the \$527 donated by the congregation, for a total of \$827 to help establish Mobile Clinics in Haiti."

*The children of Black Rock Church of the Brethren vacation Bible school pose with pastor Dave Miller in front of a chart showing their giving to the Haiti Medical Project.*



courtesy of Black Rock Church of the Brethren

### by the numbers

**48,334**

Dollars received in Annual Conference offerings this summer to support the Conference, Nigeria Crisis Fund, and Core Ministries

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).



Randy Miller

*Shirley Boyer and Maurice Flora, of the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, stand by the peace pole in front of their church entrance.*

## Promoting peace in the Pacific Southwest

**A** project honoring the late Charles “Chuck” Boyer has presented “Living Peace Church” certificates and helped plant peace poles at the 27 congregations of Pacific Southwest District in connection with the 40th anniversary of On Earth Peace, according to a report from Maurice Flora, a member of the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren. Boyer, who served as moderator of Annual Conference and pastor of the La Verne church, also was involved with the development of On Earth Peace. A group of On Earth Peace supporters arranged a presentation of framed certificates to the district’s congregations at the Pacific Southwest District conference last year.

“All congregations were presented with a new On Earth Peace certificate proclaiming each as a ‘Living Peace Church.’ Each congregation had been contacted

beforehand to let them know they would be receiving the framed certificates recognizing them as part of the ‘Community of Practice,’” Flora reported. The certificates were developed by the University of La Verne and signed by the On Earth Peace executive director and board chair.

As part of the project, congregations also were asked if they had a peace pole. Flora reported that 14 already did. The 13 that did not were given plaques for a peace pole of their own—one in English and one in Spanish. The group involved with the project included Shirley Campbell Boyer of the La Verne church, Lucile Cayford Leard of Glendale (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, Linda Williams of San Diego (Calif.) First Church of the Brethren, Marty Farahat, who is an On Earth Peace volunteer based in California, and Maurice Flora of the La Verne church.

### Serving others

## Brethren honor Charleston victims

Henry Fork Church of the Brethren helped sponsor a candlelight service in remembrance of the nine people killed at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. The service was held the evening of July 8 at the Pigg River Community Building on South Main Street in Rocky Mount, Va. The Henry Fork church sponsored it jointly with several African-American congregations. “We want our community, both black and white, to come together and name this act as evil,” said an announcement of the service in the Virilina District newsletter. “The events of the past few days in Charleston demonstrate that we have not met the mark of where God wants us to be.”



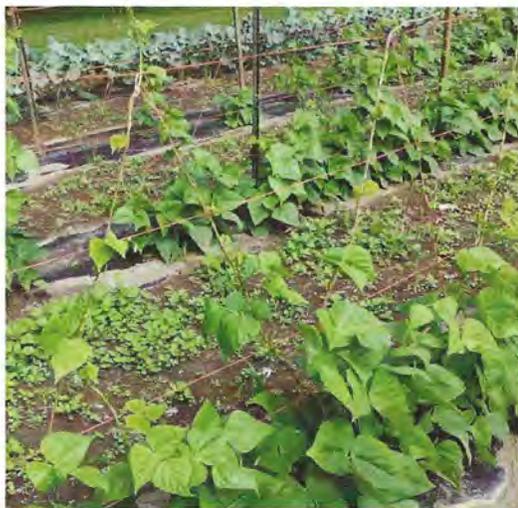


courtesy of Mount Pleasant Church of the Brethren

## Garden project grows in North Canton

Mount Pleasant Church of the Brethren in North Canton, Ohio, is getting attention for its work on a community garden. "Looking for a small piece of ground to grow a few fresh vegetables this summer? Mount Pleasant Community Garden has just the right spot. The ground has already been tilled and it's waiting for planting," said the opening sentences of a news report on the church's garden, published in *The Suburbanite* of Canton, Ohio.

The garden was started in 2011 as a way to donate fresh vegetables to the Stark County Hunger Task Force. Since then it has donated more than 35,000 pounds of food to the task force, and has opened up a number of plots to the community for use by local gardeners. Last year 24 growers participated, and the church said there is enough area to allow many more.



courtesy of Mount Pleasant Church of the Brethren

## Remembered

**Katherine A. Hess**, 63, a past chair of the Church of the Brethren General Board, died on June 4. She served on the General Board and was board chair in the 1990s, when she was active in the redesign of the denomination's former General Board structure. She was a physician and practiced medicine in Ashland, Ohio, for 35 years. While there, she served as medical director of Hospice of North Central Ohio, medical director of the EMS, and chair of the Ashland County Medical Association. She held many leadership positions at Ashland Dickey Church of the Brethren, and served as moderator of the Northern Ohio District conference as well as chair of the district board. On the denominational level, she served on the General Board 1992-1997, serving as chair 1995-1997. She represented Northern Ohio District on the Annual Conference Standing Committee 1999-2004.

**David L. Huffaker**, 81, a former member of the Church of the Brethren denominational staff, passed away July 14 at the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio. He served as planned giving officer for the former General Board from 1992 until his retirement in 2001. In volunteer service to the church, he served on the Brethren Retirement Community board 1976-1993, serving six years as chair. He was a co-owner of Huffaker Plumbing and Heating with his brother Keith, and co-owner of Cardinal Tool.

**Conrad Snavely**, 97, a former Church of the Brethren mission worker in Nigeria, died July 19 at Timbercrest Healthcare Center at the retirement community in North Manchester, Ind. He was married to Irma Snavely, with whom he served in Nigeria from 1968-1973. His mission posting in Nigeria was in the business office, and at Hillcrest School in Jos. His first wife, Irma, died in 1998. His second wife, Bertha Custer Snavely, died in July 2015. Snavely was a Church of the Brethren pastor in Virginia, Indiana, and Michigan. He served as director of Camp Brethren Heights in Rodney, Mich., for six years. He had been a member of Manchester Church of the Brethren since 1979. His volunteer service to the church included a term on the Standing Committee of district delegates to Annual Conference, and a term of service as moderator of the Michigan District. He was a graduate of Manchester College and Bethany Biblical Seminary.

**Jerry Rodeffer**, 60, of Snohomish, Wash., passed away July 19, following a brief illness. He served as chief financial officer for Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) in the early 1990s, overseeing financial operations and investments for pension, insurance, and socially responsible investing. He also was the husband of BBT's director of Employee Benefits, Lynnae Rodeffer.

**Emlyn Harley Kline**, 87, of Manassas, Va., passed away July 20 at the Bridgewater Retirement Village. He served as a seagoing cowboy with Heifer Project, delivering cattle to Europe after World War II, and in the early 1950s volunteered with Brethren Volunteer Service for several years in Greece. In other volunteer service to the church, he was elected as a member of the board of trustees for Bridgewater College in 1985, and in 2000 became a life trustee of the college. A life-long resident of Manassas, he was a dairy farmer, and devoted member of Manassas Church of the Brethren.

## Do numbers matter?

**E**ver since I graduated from Bethany Seminary in 1979, church growth has been an ongoing concern of mine. I didn't grow up Brethren. I went to Bethany because I liked its emphasis on lived service and devotion to scripture. I also came from a religiously mixed background which included friends who helped build the Willow Creek Community Church, a non-denominational, evangelical megachurch located in the Chicago suburb of South Barrington, Ill.



JEFF NEUMAN-LEE

Over time, it became clear to me then that churches—especially churches that spoke out for unity during the civil rights struggle—were in trouble. But the world needed that witness. Why not make that witness

big and beautiful, like a Willow Creek?

After attending Bethany and falling in love with Brethren theology I thought that if people just heard the culturally radical message of Jesus and his love, they would flock to him. I thought that if we just started some new churches, we could find a pattern that would work.

I tried.

One of them, in Chicago, didn't get off the ground. Another, in Fremont, Calif., succeeded for several years, and there is still a homeless shelter we helped start there. But the church didn't last. One in Denver is still going, but is small.

Why don't the Brethren grow? I can think of three reasons.

First, the gospel, which is based in Jesus' command to love, is unpopular in an American world based on violence.

and less in recent generations of Brethren. Who cares if you went to Manchester? When we get divisive with one another, the easiest solution is to return to that so-called common heritage. And while that heritage gave us people like Anna Mow and Dan West, a glue which is found only in heritage either has no room for newcomers, or calls for a lot of effort to make newcomers feel part of the family.

Third, the world is becoming less and less hospitable to our church life. There is a concentrated movement to discredit religion in general in America. Humans look for scapegoats. Many in the current generation note the dangerous consequences of fundamentalism—which is found in every religion—and tend to paint all religion with fundamentalism's evils. Combine this with an economy of wealth that goes to great lengths to promote individualism, and you find that people are not interested in joining meaningful groups. As the larger culture becomes less practiced in how to be together, our churches reflect that.

Again, while I didn't grow up Brethren, I have spent my adult life in the church. I have met many people who have given their lives to Jesus in some incredible ways. Their faith in Christ has been inspirational to me. I have found that deep change is not popular change, and that the health of society is utterly dependent upon those few who hear the call of Christ and live out that deep, spiritual change.

In my own ministry, I have come to define success and growth less and less according to definitions handed down by the institutional church. Today, when people ask me what my church is about, I tell them: "We are a church that doesn't kill people. We work to bring the peace of Jesus to everyone, no matter who they are."

There have been folks who simply reject that nonviolent

**I want to be with people who want to learn to love their enemies as Christ loved his enemies. I no longer care how many there may be.**

You really do have to trust God if you are going to walk among the Boko Harams of society without any worldly defense. You have to trust in God if you give up your economic advantage to care for the poor. We Brethren keep coming back to Jesus, who said, "Love your enemies."

Second, although living in the way of Christ is our ideal, we sometimes don't live up to that. Instead, we often tend to lean on a Brethren unity found in our Brethren heritage. Personally, this doesn't work for me, and it has worked less

and inclusive Jesus and walk away, and that's OK. God will find other paths for them. But there are some who hear that message and agree with it.

I want to be with people who want to learn to love their enemies as Christ loved his enemies. I no longer care how many there may be. *JN*

Jeff Neuman-Lee is team pastor at Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren, Littleton, Colo., and founding pastor of Whittier Community Church in Denver.

**“I may never find the words for the prayers that I want to articulate.”**

—Gimhiva Kettering, director of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of the Brethren, reflecting on the shooting deaths of nine Emanuel AME Church members in Charleston, S.C., and the ongoing struggle against racism in the US

**“The Bible is not a linear story; we have to find out how our story is woven into it.”**

—Richard Newton, assistant professor of Religious Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, speaking at the college’s Annual Conference luncheon this summer on the topic “The African American Bible: Bound in a Christian Nation”

**“He told me how his heifer had helped his family survive. She was so important that they kept her in the house with them.”**

—Author Peggy Reiff Miller, speaking at the Brethren Press and MESSENGER dinner at Annual Conference this summer about her research on seagoing cowboys who helped bring heifers to a devastated Europe following World War II through Heifer Project, now Heifer International, and the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

**cultureview**

► **US counties with nicer weather and prettier natural surroundings**

see lower rates of religious affiliation according to a Baylor University study published in the journal *Sociology of Religion*. The authors suggest that people tend to use nature as a spiritual resource, making it a competitor with organized religious institutions. Counties in regions such as the Pacific Northwest with more natural amenities—mountains, bodies of water, forests, warm weather—had lower percentages of people belonging to traditional religious institutions than counties in regions such as the Midwest with flatter landscapes and colder winters.

► **The religious face of America is largely a Christian one**

with roughly 7 in 10 Americans belonging to that faith, according to results released recently on the Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study. But some of the nation’s biggest metropolitan areas have

a very different look. Only about half of the residents in the Seattle (52 percent) and San Francisco (48 percent) metropolitan areas identify as Christians, as well as roughly 6 in 10 or fewer of those living in Boston (57 percent) and New York (59 percent).

► **From January to June 2015**

the globally averaged temperature over land and ocean surfaces was the hottest for such period on record, the United Nations World Meteorological Organization has reported, citing new highs across the planet in June, with heatwaves across South Asia, Europe and pockets of the United States. June marks the third month this year that has broken its monthly temperature record, along with March and May. The fresh highs set off warm weather alerts as heat waves gripped places such as Austria, Spain, and Australia. The soaring temperatures killed hundreds of people in India and Pakistan in June.

**Heard 'round the world**

**“Walking together as friends requires talking together in truth. Wherever we see relationships starting to break down, we must reach out. To offer the hand of friendship is to offer the hope of peace.”**

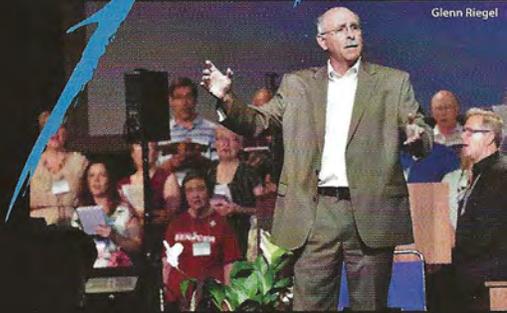
—Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, in a message to the service of friendship and reconciliation at Canterbury Cathedral marking the 70th anniversary of Victory in Japan Day

**“Annual Conference was not about the business this year. It was about our brothers and sisters in Nigeria.”**

—Susan Boyer, pastor of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, who was born in Garkida, Nigeria

Bearing fruit in

Tampa



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

**“You had to be there.”**

It’s what people say when they can’t find words adequate to convey the power, emotion, and magnitude of something they experienced.

This summer’s Annual Conference, held July 11-15 in Tampa, Fla., was like that, due in no small part to the Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) Women’s Fellowship Choir, who treated attendees to several spirited performances during the week. Others who rounded out the delegation from Nigeria, including EYN president Samuel Dante Dali and his wife, Rebecca, added emotional accounts of the turmoil they have faced in their country in recent years.

Even if you weren’t there, you may have experienced their warm embrace if yours was among the congregations lucky enough to be visited by the Nigerian Brethren during the weeks leading up to Conference. It was their way of thanking and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters in the US who have walked with them in spirit or contributed assistance during their struggles at the hands of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram.

Sweltering tropical weather—including occasional downpours—did not dampen the spirits of conferencegoers, nor deter them from venturing into the host city for meals and Conference-related activities, such as the Brethren Benefit Trust 5K Fitness Challenge. Participants in that event avoided wither-



Glenn Riegel

## Conference by the numbers

- **2,075** total registrations, including **647** delegates
- More than **\$48,300** received in Conference offerings, which were received for a number of purposes including Annual Conference, the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and the Core Ministries of the Church of the Brethren
- **181** usable pints donated at the Blood Drive, which was dedicated in honor of the late R. Jan Thompson
- **\$8,750** raised by the quilt auction of the Association of Brethren Caregivers, benefitting the Nigeria Crisis Fund
- **1** new district and 1 fellowship were welcomed. Puerto Rico was welcomed as the 24th district. Rios de Agua Viva, Leicester, N.C., was welcomed as a fellowship.
- **\$3,951.15** and **5** pallets of goods donated to Tampa’s Metropolitan Ministries
- **200** simultaneous logins for worship webcast on Sunday morning. As of Sunday evening, on the second day of the Conference, combined live and recorded webcasts of worship and business already totaled more than 1,000 views.
- International guests included some **50-60** Nigerian Brethren representing leadership of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), the EYN Women’s Fellowship Choir, and the BEST (Brethren Evangelism Support Trust) group of Nigerian Brethren businesspeople and professionals. Also attending were church leaders from Brazil, Haiti, Spain and the Canary Islands, and mission workers from South Sudan, Haiti, Vietnam, and Nigeria. Quaker pastors from Burundi and Rwanda who partner in peace work with the Congolese Brethren were among the special guests this year.



ing mid-day temperatures by starting at 7 a.m. and making their way along the picturesque waterfront Tampa Riverwalk.

Nor was there much heat—tropical and otherwise—in the Conference business. While there were a few hot-under-the-collar moments, the agenda held no hot-button issues to speak of. Moderator David Steele presided as business got underway Sunday afternoon, when the Conference set in motion a

Review and Evaluation Committee to assess denominational organization, structure, and functions, among other business. The Review and Evaluation Committee will carry out its study and make recommendations in 2017. The Conference appoints such a committee in the fifth year of each decade to assess a wide-ranging list including agency collaboration, church members' interest in denominational program, and more.

## Celebrating the service of general secretary Stan Noffsinger

**S**tanley Noffsinger's term as general secretary will conclude before the 2016 Annual Conference, and so a celebration of his service to the church was held at this Conference. Through a video and the reflections of many speakers, conferencegoers were reminded of the many aspects of his leadership of the denomination since he accepted the call to that position in 2003.

Annual Conference moderator David Steele spoke on behalf of the denominational leadership, and remembered getting to know Noffsinger in 2004, and how he was encouraged in his own sense of call at that time. David Shetler, on behalf of the Council of District Executives, spoke of Noffsinger as a lookout, keeping watch over the churches and districts, and a prophetic watch-keeper as the voice of peace in the larger Christian community and world.

Ecumenical guests also added their voices to the celebration. Samuel Dali, president of EYN, said the Nigerian people "have come to know Stanley as a true, serious imitator of Jesus Christ," celebrating him as a humble, compassionate leader with a deep concern for others. He invited Noffsinger to return to Nigeria "when God and your family agree."

From one of the major ecumenical organizations with which Noffsinger relates, Christian Churches Together, director Carlos Malavé gave thanks on behalf of the ecumenical community for Noffsinger's commitment to interchurch work at a time when many heads of communions have it as a low priority. The Very Reverend Father Aren Jebejian of the Armenian Orthodox Church in America said Noffsinger embodies the spirit of the Brethren who, in 1917, stepped in to help during the Armenian Genocide. He presented the gift of a carved Armenian cross, saying, "It is small, but it represents the huge love the Armenian church has for your general secretary."

In his response, Noffsinger said, "There is nothing greater than being in and among the body of Christ." He also turned the body's thoughts to the future, saying this is an important time in the life of the denomination when the church must decide whether it will be unified as the body of Christ, even with disagreements on some issues. "I hope we make a decision to be a unified body of Christ in this particular community known as the Church of the Brethren. We have an important voice, small though we may be—a voice that is sought after. So choose your words wisely because we are being sought out as followers of Jesus and another way of living."

*The Noffsinger family gathers on stage for the celebration of Stan Noffsinger's term of service as general secretary, including his wife, Debbie, and sons Caleb and Evan. At the podium is Pam Reist from the Mission and Ministry Board, who helped organize the creation of a memory book for Noffsinger to commemorate his years of service.*





A new study of vitality called for by the Standing Committee of district delegates received support from the Conference, and responded to “Query: Future District Structure.” Hours of discussion in Standing Committee revealed varying points of view about the need to evaluate district structure, and a desire to address concerns about church vitality. Named to the committee were Larry Dentler, Southern Pennsylvania District; Shayne Petty, Southern Ohio District; Sonya Griffith, Western Plains District; Craig Smith, Atlantic Northeast District; and associate general secretary Mary Jo Flory-Steury.

A “Resolution on Christian Minority Communities” brought by the Mission and Ministry Board was adopted. It focuses on areas where Christians are targeted as religious minorities, and steps for Brethren to take in response.



A “Wall of Healing” is displayed during the afternoon business session focus on Nigeria. The “wall” displays 10,000 names of Nigerian Brethren killed by Boko Haram or who died of effects of the insurgent violence over the past few years in Nigeria. The display lists the names and dates of each death and each person’s home town or village, on 17 posters sized about 3 by 6 feet. During the afternoon session, Nigerian guests carried the posters around the hall while the delegate body prayed for Nigeria. Shown here, the session included the singing of “Amazing Grace” in Hausa and English.

## EYN president Samuel Dante Dali thanks US Brethren

*EYN president Samuel Dante Dali expressed gratitude to Brethren in the US on behalf of the Nigerian Brethren for their support of EYN in recent years. Following are excerpts from his address.*

**I am standing here on behalf of the leadership** and the entire membership of EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, to express our sincere heartfelt appreciation to the leadership and all the members of the Church of the Brethren, our founding parents. We sincerely thank all of you for your Christ-like love which you are demonstrating to EYN in tangible ways during her time of misery and hopelessness.

[Boko Haram’s] vicious attacks on the communities in northeastern Nigeria started in 2009, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. These are the states where EYN, since her founding in 1923, has been operating as the predominant Christian denomination. These states have gone through horrific suffering for six years with little or no help from the government.

As a result of these attacks, about 70 percent of EYN members have been uprooted from their traditional homeland and displaced. EYN has lost more than 8000 members, and 1,674 church buildings have been completely burned down. Most of our educational and medical institutions have been destroyed or closed down. All of the Bible school teachers, community development staff, including medical clinic staff, and 1,390 pastors, assistant pastors, and evangelists are now without work and income.

When we realized that there was no help coming from the government, we attempted to seek help from the international community. However, we were shocked as we were bluntly told that our case was not big enough to attract the sympathy of the international community.

We felt very discouraged and nearly lost all hope. We decided to rely completely on God. Then you, the Church of the Brethren, suddenly and dramatically came to our rescue. You have been crying and groaning together with us. You have held our hands, walking with us through the valley of the shadow of death.

This to us is similar to a resurrection from the dead, because we were almost dead to the point of losing all hope, but you came and strengthened our hope to live. We were blinded by too much crying and the cloud of suffering, but you came and wiped our tears and opened our eyes to see a clear and better future. We are very happy and proud to have you as our founding parents. EYN, for generations to come, will be grateful to all of you for your unconditional Christ-like love and care.

Business deferred from 2014 was approved. “Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren” clarifies term of service for a board member chosen chair-elect, expectations for unexpired terms, and recognizes Pacific Northwest and Puerto Rico Districts. “Interpretation of Polity Regarding Agency Financial Reports” allows agencies to make financial reports in electronic form.

“Polity Change Proposal from Brethren Benefit Trust” allows a BBT board incumbent eligible for a second term to automatically be on the ballot, with approval from the BBT board. “Amendments to the BBT Articles of Organization” includes minor changes as well as significant changes that solidify an understanding of BBT as an independent organization in relationship to Annual Conference.

In other business, delegates made a 1 percent cost of living increase in the recommended minimum salary table for pastors.

The crisis of EYN, which has been dealing for years with assault from Boko Haram, was the subject of a detailed report to the delegates. Presenters included Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service, who outlined the five-year Nigeria Crisis Response, and EYN president Samuel Dali, who expressed thanks for the support of the American church.

Dali said to the American Brethren: “You came and strengthened our hope to live. You came and wiped our eyes to see a clearer and better future. . . . We believe the future of the church will be better than before.”

Delegates also prayed surrounded by a “Wall of Healing”—17

## Words from worship

### Saturday evening

“The irony of love: it presses us to the margins and makes us uncomfortable. . . . When we bear the fruit of love . . . ‘those people’ will become brothers, sisters, because love is transformational.”

—Annual Conference moderator David Steele, preaching for the opening worship service.

### Sunday morning

“The heart of Jesus is in this body.”

—Rodger Nishioka preaching for Sunday morning worship. He commented on the text for the morning from Romans 12, “To embody the new community is to let love be genuine. . . . Paul the apostle is lining out for us, this is what it means to embody the new community.” Nishioka is from the Presbyterian Church USA and teaches at Columbia Theological Seminary.

### Monday evening

“Let us admit we need each other to care for us, to wash our dirty, aching feet. . . . Let us admit that the one who calls us to love one another will create in us a clean heart.”

—Katie Shaw Thompson preaching for Monday evening worship. She has pastored Ivester Church of the Brethren in Northern Plains District since graduating from Bethany Seminary in 2012, and is part of the first cohort of the David G. Buttrick Certificate Program in Homiletic Peer Coaching at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

### Tuesday evening

“Our response to Nigeria shows that when it comes right down to it, we still know how to bear fruit. That gives me hope for our church.”

—Don Fitzkee, who is beginning a term of service as chair of the Mission and Ministry Board, and has been a free minister at Chiques Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa. He is director of development at COBYS Family Services affiliated with Atlantic Northeast District.

### Wednesday morning

“Through social media, we can reach more people than Jesus did when on earth.”

—Thomas Dowdy, pastor at Imperial Heights Church of the Brethren in Los Angeles, Calif., who preached the closing sermon of Annual Conference 2015.



Regina Holmes



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes

banners each about six feet tall, bearing the names of more than 10,000 Nigerian Brethren who have died in the violence. The names and information on the banners were collected by Rebecca Dali and staff of her nonprofit, CCEPI.

Conference concluded Wednesday morning with worship and the consecration of moderator Andy Murray, of Huntingdon, Pa., and moderator-elect Carol Scheppard, of Mount Sidney, Va. 

Contributors to this report include Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services, and members of the volunteer Annual Conference News Team: Glenn Riegel, Regina Holmes, Frances Townsend, Karen Garrett, Keith and Justin Hollenberg, Alysson Wittmeyer, Donna Parcell, Alyssa Parker, Eddie Edmonds; and web staff Jan Fischer Bachman and Russ Otto.



## Election results

Carol Scheppard has been chosen as moderator-elect of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. She will serve as moderator-elect at next year's Conference in 2016, and as moderator for the 2017 Conference. Scheppard is vice president and dean of Academic Affairs at Bridgewater (Va.) College and is a member of Lebanon Church of the Brethren in Mount Sidney, Va. She grew up in New England, living at various times in Thomaston, Conn.; Salem, Mass.; and Putney, Vt. It was in Putney where she first encountered the Brethren, joining Genesis Church of the Brethren under the leadership of pastor Paul Grout. She completed her master of divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, and also has a master's in special education from Lesley College in Cambridge, Mass., and a doctorate in religious studies from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Other new leadership includes:

### **Program and Arrangements Committee:**

- Founa Inola Augustin-Badet of Eglise des Freres Haitiens Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Southeast District

### **Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:**

- Beth M. Cage of Lewiston Church of the Brethren in Northern Plains District

### **Review and Evaluation Committee:**

- Ben S. Barlow of Montezuma Church of the Brethren in Shenandoah District

- Tim Harvey of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Virgina District
- Leah J. Hileman of Lake View Christian Fellowship in Southern Pennsylvania District
- Robert D. Kettering of Lititz Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District
- David Shumate of Daleville Church of the Brethren in Virgina District

### **Mission and Ministry Board:**

- Area 1 - Paul Albert Liepelt of Somerset Church of the Brethren, Western Pennsylvania District
- Area 4 - John Hoffman of Monitor Community Church of the Brethren, Western Plains District
- Area 5 - Mark Bausman of Community Church of the Brethren in Idaho District

### **Affirmed to positions on the Mission and Ministry Board:**

- Carl R. Fike of Oak Park Church of the Brethren, West Marva District
- David C. Stauffer of Stevens Hill Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District
- Patrick C. Starkey of Cloverdale Church of the Brethren, Virgina District

### **On Earth Peace Board:**

- Christy Crouse of Warrensburg Church of the Brethren in Missouri and Arkansas District

### **Affirmed to positions on the**

### **On Earth Peace board:**

- George D. Barnhart of Central Church

- of the Brethren, Virgina District
- Gail Erisman Valeta of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren, Western Plains District
- Jordan Bles of Westminster Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District
- Irvin R. Heishman of West Charleston Church of the Brethren, Southern Ohio District

### **Brethren Benefit Trust Board:**

- Harry Spencer Rhodes of Central, Roanoke Church of the Brethren in Virgina District

### **Affirmed to positions on the Brethren Benefit Trust Board:**

- Gerald A. Patterson of Manassas Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District
- Donna McKee Rhodes of Stone Church of the Brethren, Middle Pennsylvania District

### **Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees:**

- Laity: Lynn N. Myers of Antioch Church of the Brethren in Virgina District
- Clergy: Christopher Bowman of Manassas Church of the Brethren in Mid-Atlantic District

### **Affirmed to positions on the seminary board:**

- David W. Miller of Black Rock Church of the Brethren, Southern Pennsylvania District
- John W. Flora of Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, Shenandoah District

## Samuel Dali discusses EYN's future

*EYN president Samuel Dante Dali spoke with MESSENGER at Annual Conference about what lies ahead for Nigerian Brethren.*

### ■ How would you describe the present status of EYN emotionally and spiritually?

The EYN *Majalisa* (annual conference) earlier this year was our first time to come together after being displaced within the country, and also scattered to places like Cameroon and Chad. After the recent election in Nigeria, the attacks have subsided. After being tired and exhausted for so long, people are eager to return to their homes. Some are still suspicious that it may not be a good thing to do. We encourage them not to rush, and some of the first people who returned were slaughtered. But in some of the places, they have started to pick up the pieces, despite the devastation. However, some had to return to the camps in order to get food. People are essentially starting from scratch.

Life in the camps is not good for people. They are crowded in one small place, and they are getting tired of it. But the attacks are diminishing, so people are hoping things will improve. They are hoping the new government will do something about it, but it's not going to be magic and it will not happen overnight.

Our members are very strong in their faith. In some ways, this situation has brought us closer than before. We've tried to encourage one another. Wherever we find ourselves, we need to continue with life, and not rely on the properties of this world. Those who have died have gone to be with the Lord. Those of us who are alive will continue to do what God has asked us to do. In Philippians, Paul says, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." If we are alive, we are to serve Jesus Christ; if we die, we are with Christ. So we should not be discouraged. That's what we're teaching our members.

We've learned that we must continue to be Christian wherever we find ourselves, so that out of this crisis we'll be stronger than before. In the beginning, we asked, "Why has God allowed this to happen?"

Even before this happened, we sometimes wondered about our relationship with the Church of the Brethren. But when this happened, the Church of the Brethren came to our side with full force. We realized that they still love us, they have not forgotten us. This experience has brought us together as members of one whole family. We are not alone. This is not an EYN issue, this is a global issue. This gives us greater hope that EYN will be come a very strong church.

### ■ What gives you hope as you think about the situation in your country currently?

As for the recent election, we realized that it doesn't matter if it is a Christian or a Muslim who is in power. If he is against corruption, if he'll be strict with the law, that is what matters. We believe [the new president, Mohammed Buhari], will work with all Nigerians. So this gives us hope. We rely on God. God is in charge of this world. He understands what's going on. Sometimes God can take a bad situation and move it to a better spot. Some people thought that after the election, our country would disintegrate into a civil war. But that didn't happen. It's not just politicians who are in charge of this country. We have hope that it will get better.

### ■ What are some of the biggest challenges that remain?

Most of our pastors totally depend on support from local congregations. But now that so many churches have been destroyed and members are struggling to survive, they can no longer support their pastors. The pastors wonder how long they can remain without a salary. They get discouraged. So, that's one of the biggest challenges we face now: How can we assure pastors that things will get better? Headquarters doesn't have money to pay them, and so some of them think we don't care.

### ■ What can the US Church of the Brethren do to help EYN?

It's doing so much already. We never expected this help. We're surviving because the Church of the Brethren has helped us. They have given us hope, but how long can they sustain this support? We realize



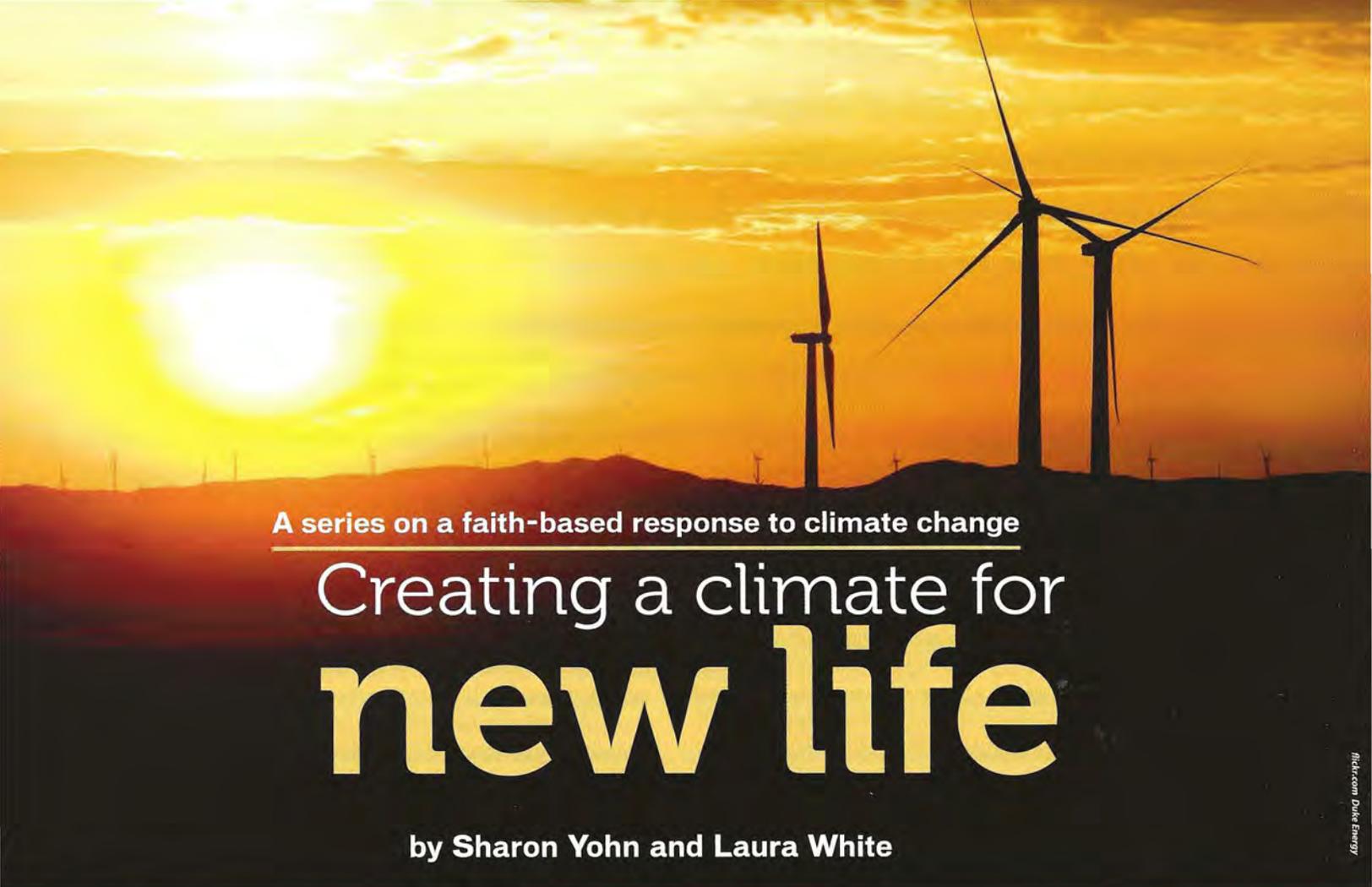
that the Church of the Brethren is also shrinking, and we're aware of the economic challenges in the US. But, despite these challenges, the Church of the Brethren has acted in such a big way. They've gone beyond their means. The effort they have put forth is far beyond their number.

### ■ How were you and others in the Nigeria delegation received as you've traveled around the US prior to Conference?

The members of the Nigerian choir have said they are very happy with their reception at Annual Conference, and during their tour in the US leading up to Conference. Their group was greeted as queens and kings. They will go home as ambassadors and share the love they have experienced and the spirit displayed in the Conference, and how EYN was the focus. They will share with EYN that the Brethren in the US are strongly behind us.

People in the US sometimes say to me: "We feel we aren't doing anything." No, the Church of the Brethren in the US is doing more than we ever expected. They've really taken a huge responsibility for our country, which we appreciate so much.

The Church of the Brethren should not be discouraged. When the early church started in Jerusalem, it shrunk at first, but the shrinking expanded it around the world. Although the Church of the Brethren may be shrinking in US, it's exploding around the world. So we should be happy that their strength is expanding. We hope that we'll all see that, globally, we're not shrinking. Together, we're growing. The Church of the Brethren was not created just for the US, but for the world. So the seed has expanded and is germinating around the world. **ZU**



A series on a faith-based response to climate change

# Creating a climate for new life

by Sharon Yohn and Laura White

*To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant,  
and a time to pluck up that which is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to cast away stones,  
and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace,  
and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to get, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to rend, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence,  
and a time to speak... (Ecclesiastes 3:1-7)*

**A**s the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us so poetically, the world is continually in flux. Seasons run their course and end, only to be followed by new seasons. Of course we know this, yet how often do we vainly cling to the season that's waning, unable to bear the thought

of giving it up—of surrendering to the unknown future? How often do we lack faith that each new season will bring its unique blessings and gifts from God, if only we are open to recognizing and accepting them? How often do we so dread the prospects of dying or weeping, mourning or losing, casting away or rending, that we forget all about the potentials for being born anew, for healing, for building up, for laughing, for dancing?

Whether we are prepared to accept it or not, humanity's season of fossil-fuel use must begin drawing to a close. What a glorious season it has been in so many ways: Fossil fuels have given us the ability to grow foods in abundance with less back-breaking labor, to cook and store those foods with ease and convenience, to heat and cool our homes and workplaces with the touch of a thermostat, to travel far and wide in safety and comfort, to enjoy a dizzying array of consumer goods from all over the world, and more.

If we are honest, however, we must acknowledge that the fossil-fuel season has had its dark sides, as well: deaths of coal miners and oil-rig workers, black lung disease, mercury pollution and soot, acid precipitation, mountaintop removal, poisoned water supplies, despoiled wilderness, wars for fossil-fuel access and, most notably, climate-changing emissions of carbon dioxide and methane. And the costs and benefits have not been equally shared; the collateral fossil-fuel dam-

age has, by and large, hit poorest communities and nations the hardest, even though they have often benefitted the least from fossil fuels' use.

Fossil fuels are so integral to our daily lives that it can be profoundly unsettling to try to imagine surviving without them, much less thriving. Envision, however, the following:

*In rural Pennsylvania, a father sees his daughter off to school. As the bus pulls away, there is no stench of diesel fumes. The bus is powered by methane produced (along with the carrots in the girl's lunch) at the local farm in a biogas digester that runs on manure and crop waste. Local farms are thriving with the additional income from biogas and the strong demand for local food.*

*Outside of Elgin, Ill., a family moves into a recently renovated suburb where homes are energy-efficient, well insulated, and affordable to heat and cool. Residents of all ages can walk or bike safely to the grocery store, the library, the schools, and the park. Wind farms are visible in the distance, and the parents are grateful that asthma rates have declined since they were children. Manufacturing jobs are booming in the region, as wind turbines are heavy and difficult to transport long distances and are therefore produced locally. Installation, maintenance, and operation are also providing long-term, well-paying jobs, creating a vibrant and prosperous economy.*

*In Southern California, an older couple sits on their small front porch and marvels at the changes they've witnessed over their lifetimes. They grew up in a city of ozone and air pollution warnings, the cacophony of the internal combustion engine, and telephones attached to wires. Now, as they look out, they see solar panels on most roof tops, community gardens, and remarkably clear air. Local, small-scale electricity generation is supplemented by larger, community-scale generation. During the daytime, excess electricity is stored in batteries or used to split water into oxygen and hydrogen (for use in fuel cells). Shared laughter of a parent and child is louder than the electric car that passes by the porch. Technology jobs are abundant in this region, as are manufacturing and installation jobs in the solar industry.*

As you ponder these visions, do you find them inspiring and energizing? Do you scoff and dismiss them as unrealistic and improbable? Do you yearn to believe that they could come true, yet doubt that they actually could? Do you long to dance, yet feel mired in mourning?

While evaluating these visions, it's worth bearing in mind that humans have accomplished so very many things that seemed both unrealistic and improbable at the outset: outlawing slavery, developing antibiotics, inventing airplanes, land-

ing on the moon. In 1938, when Dan West first conceived of shipping livestock across the Atlantic to help fight hunger in Spain, who would have imagined that this audacious scheme would eventually bring aid to more than 22 million families worldwide over 70 years later? And yet Heifer Project/Heifer International has done just that.

**A** transition away from fossil fuels certainly seems less inconceivable when we consider the dramatic changes that most of us have experienced in our lifetimes. In fact, a transition to renewable energy is far easier to imagine now than it was just a decade ago. Scientists and engineers are tackling the technological challenges (such as energy storage), while entrepreneurs are finding innovative ways of funding renewable projects—and many are making a profit in the process. Solar cells and wind turbines have plummeted in price; once installed, they harness energy sources—the sun and the wind—that are free for the taking. Many long-range planners, civilian and military, are seeing the wisdom of reducing their reliance on fuels that can fluctuate rapidly in price.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, the number of nations with targets for switching to renewable energy has quadrupled since 2005, from 43 to 164. Some of these targets are quite ambitious and are well on their way to being attained. China is rapidly accelerating its investments in solar, wind, and hydropower and is expected to generate 20 percent of its electricity renewably by 2020.

On a sunny day in May of 2014, Germany generated a record 74 percent of its electricity renewably, with its modern electricity system dealing easily with the variable electrical inputs from different sources. Perhaps more surprisingly, Costa Rica currently generates at least 90 percent of its electricity renewably; earlier this year, its national electric utility supplied its citizens with 100 percent fossil fuel-free electricity for a world-record 75 straight days. Denmark, meanwhile, is on pace to achieve total independence from fossil fuels in 35 years, meeting *all* of its electricity, transportation, heating, and cooling needs with renewables by 2050.

Sadly, the United States has been considerably less ambitious in embracing the challenges of switching to renewable energy. Why is this so? Surely, it's not because we lack technical skill, ingenuity, or innovative spirit. We have no shortage of talented scientists and engineers, or dearth of first-rate research institutions. What we do lack, we believe, is simply the political will to make phasing out fossil fuels a national priority—and is it any wonder? The Center for Responsive

Politics—a nonpartisan, independent, nonprofit research organization that tracks money in US politics and its effects on elections and public policy—reports the following startling statistics: In the 2013-2014 election cycle, 395 incumbent or newly elected members of the 435-seat US House of Representatives received campaign contributions from sources tied to the fossil-fuel industry, as did 92 incumbent or newly elected members of the 100-seat US Senate! Funds flowed to both sides of the aisle in both chambers, to the tune of more than \$31 million in all. (In contrast, candidates received less than \$1.6 million from the renewable energy sector.) In exchange, the fossil-fuel industry has benefited from favorable Congressional treatment, including extremely generous subsidies. Many are surprised to learn that US fossil-fuel subsidies (i.e. direct government spending and tax credits) far exceed those for renewables. According to the nonpartisan Environmental Law Institute, between 2002 and 2008, US fossil-fuel

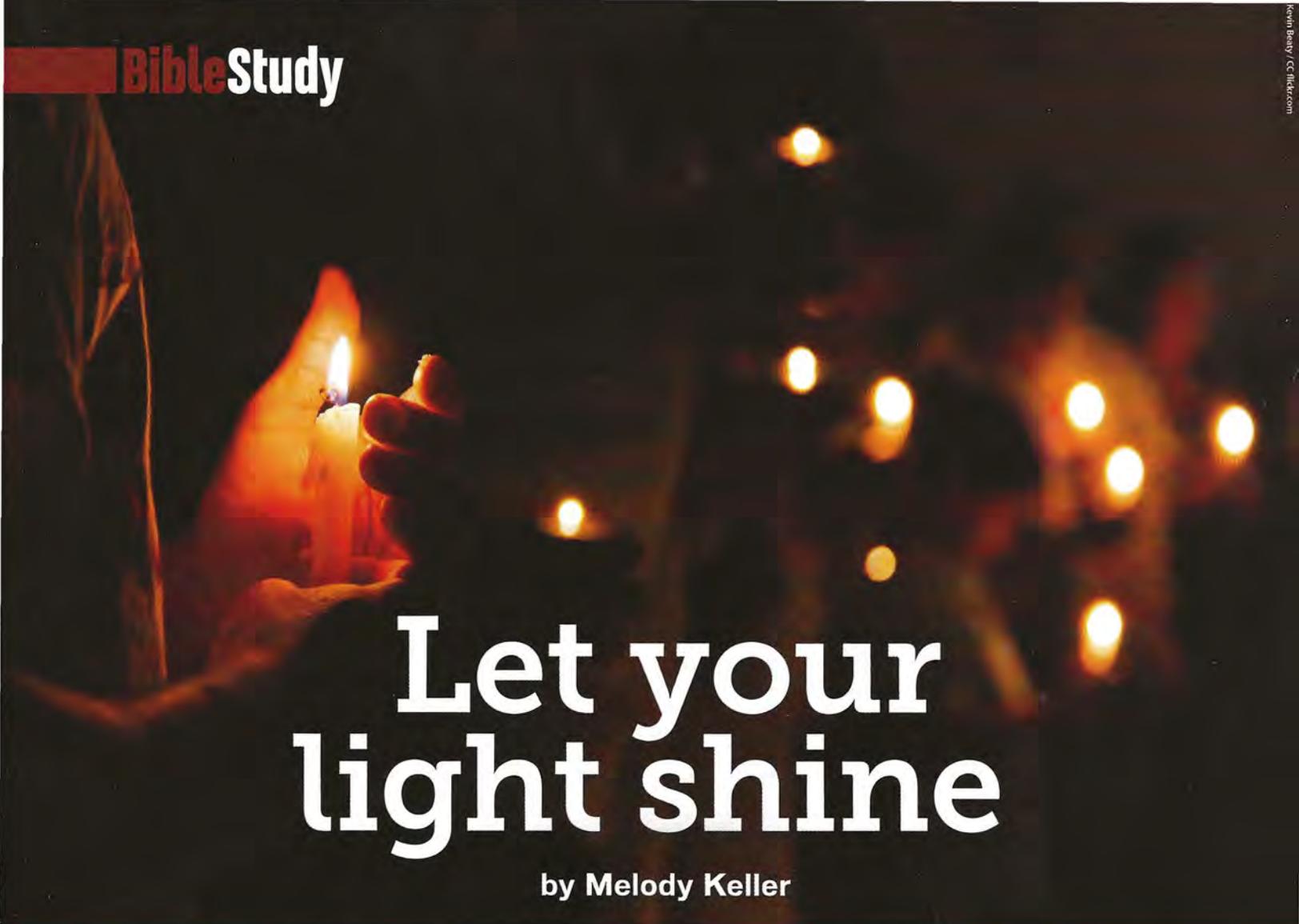
subsidies were more than double those for renewables. If corn-based ethanol is removed from the renewable side of the equation (because growing corn requires so much fossil fuel), the figure jumps to five times more subsidies for fossil fuels.

We believe that the time has come to lift our voices about the need to cast away fossil fuels and begin the transition to renewable energy in earnest. As Christians called to care for our neighbors and all of creation, now is our time to speak – to hold our elected representatives accountable and share our bold visions widely. Now is our time to usher in a season of new life. Now is our time to dance! 

Sharon Yohn is assistant professor of chemistry at Juniata 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, Huntingdon, Pa. where they are co-leaders of an environmental awareness and stewardship group known as the Sustainability Circle.

**“ As you ponder these visions . . . Do you yearn to believe that they could come true, yet doubt that they actually could? Do you long to dance, yet feel mired in mourning? ”**





# Let your light shine

by Melody Keller

**A**s I write these words, the summer sun is setting in the west. Another day is drawing to a close, and night is beginning to fall. Families are together in their backyards. Friends sit and chat in downtown coffeeshops. Fathers tuck their children in to beds before little eyes succumb to sleep. Evening can be a welcome reprieve from the bustle of the day, and cherished relaxation ahead of tomorrow's busy schedule.

As I look at the state of the world today, it seems that night has come—but in a far less tranquil way. Jesus wasn't kidding when he said in John 16:33 (KJV), "...in this world ye shall have tribulation..." The word "tribulation" means "a cause of great trouble or suffering."

It's nighttime when a young man walks into a church in South Carolina and kills nine people who were involved in a Bible study.

It's nighttime when videos are published of people being beheaded, or of a pilot being burned alive in a cage.

It's nighttime when a school principal is fired because he dared to speak his mind about the actions of a police officer.

It's nighttime when women walk into clinics to end the lives

of their babies—precious gifts from God, rejected before birth.

It's nighttime when Iran works toward a nuclear weapon and Israel fears the worst.

It's nighttime when husbands and wives decide that "until death do us part" does not really mean that, and families are broken.

It's nighttime when our politicians become mired in scandal and don't hold the values of honor.

It's nighttime when our nation is swimming in debt and financial fears create anxiety.

It's nighttime when disease hits our families and friends, and when cures are unknown or hard to find.

It's nighttime when the Bible is cast aside for flawed ideas or cultural whims.

It's nighttime when our churches fight each other from within, causing less influence without.

It's nighttime when we wonder what kind of world our children will face, praying that they will stand strong in the Lord.

It's nighttime when things that once caused us to blush are now commonplace, and things previously done in secret are flaunted.

It's nighttime when women are used and abused by men to fulfill their desires.

It's nighttime when young people who feel rejected by friends and family lose hope and believe the only way to relieve their pain is by taking their own lives.

Yes, it's nighttime in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. But is there hope? Praise God, that answer is "Yes!"

reservoirs, but rivers. Don't keep that hope all to yourselves; let it flow into your world.

As the sunset fades and night deepens, streetlights, shop lights, and headlights shine, and I am reminded that it is in the darkness that the light shines brightest.

Once, while on a ship in Hawaii, I learned that during wartime, a sailor had to be careful even in lighting a cigarette for

**People of God, our call is certain and our cause is clear.  
Get those lights on hills and lamp stands for all to see.  
When light shines, darkness has no place to hide.**

Two years ago, I sat with family at the front of a church sanctuary at my grandma's funeral. A few weeks earlier, I had visited her in the nursing unit of Pleasant View Retirement Community. It was a visit I had dreaded at the time, but now treasure.

It was the last time that I talked with Grandma. Many times, Grandma and I had laughed together on our visits, but not on this one. Neither of us was in the mood for that. She was tired and ready to leave the confines of her earthly body. I was, perhaps, saying goodbye.

As we visited, I recited and read scripture, I cried, we held hands and prayed. When we finished, Grandma continued to hold my hand. A little more than a week later, we received the news that Grandma had died.

My brother, Jordan, was one of the speakers at her funeral. He read excerpts from her diaries. He spoke of hope, telling us, "Man can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, and about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope."

Hope—we need that word written on our hearts!

I love what Romans 15:13 says: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

We are not saved for the sole purpose of going to heaven. We are saved to be like Jesus. We are saved to represent him to the world.

Brethren, we are called to be heralds of hope, to abound in hope. And the good news is that our God is a God of hope!

Brothers and sisters, we need to embrace Romans 15:13, to be people filled with joy and peace in believing so that we can pass that joy and peace to others, for we are not meant to be

fear that the enemy might spot him from miles away. Yes, light shines best in the dark.

That's where God's church comes in. We have been called to be the light in this night. It is our time. It is our duty. It is our calling.

Jesus told us that we are the light of the world. He wants our lights to be glowing everywhere.

The light shines in the hallways of our hospitals as people are comforted.

The light shines through the prayers of the people.

The light shines as a beloved child is welcomed home.

The light shines in the loving of the lonely.

The light shines through the generosity of the giver.

The light shines in the serving of the saints.

The light shines in the refuge for the rejected.

The light shines in the counsel for the confused.

The light shines in the courage of the caring.

The light shines when hope is there for the hurting.

The light shines in the searching for the weary and wandering.

The light shines in the love for the lost.

Yes, God's light shines—especially in the night.

A children's song likely sung at vacation Bible schools this summer reminds us of that light: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

People of God, our call is certain and our cause is clear. Get those lights on hills and lamp stands for all to see. When light shines, darkness has no place to hide. **🕯️**

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

# Timeline approved for general secretary search

**D**uring its Annual Conference meetings in July, the Mission and Ministry Board approved a timeline for the search for the next general secretary, and named a seven-member search committee.

Called to the search committee are current board members Connie Burk Davis (convener), Mission and Ministry Board chair-elect from Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District; Jerry Crouse, executive committee member from Warrensburg (Mo.) Church of the Brethren, Missouri and Arkansas District; Jonathan Prater from Mt. Zion-Linville (Va.) Church of the Brethren, Shenandoah District; Patrick Starkey, executive committee member from Cloverdale (Va.) Church of the Brethren, Virginia District; along with outgoing board member Pamela Reist from Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District; district executive and past Annual Conference moderator David Steele, from Middle Pennsylvania District; and former Annual Conference moderator Belita

Mitchell from Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District.

## Timeline for the search

**July-October 2015:** The search committee meets, organizes, and prepares a job description and a job announcement for approval/review by the board in October

**October 2015:** The executive committee proposes a salary and benefits package/range for board approval

**After the October 2015 board meeting:** The job opening is announced; candidates begin to be identified

**November 2015-March 2016:** Interviews are carried out by the search committee

**March 2016:** The board receives a report from search committee and the committee presents a candidate to the board for a question and answer session and vote

**Annual Conference 2016:** A new general secretary is introduced

**July-September 2016:** A new general secretary begins work

# Brethren respond in fire-ravaged Washington

**Members of the Ellisforde Church of the Brethren** in Tonasket, Wash., have been quick to respond to needs of firefighters and fire victims in their area, even as they themselves have been driven from their homes by smoke and flames in recent weeks.

“We were getting ready to open our church doors for those needing a place to stay when we were evacuated,” reported Ellisforde Church of the Brethren pastor Debbie Roberts.

Meanwhile, members of the Ellisforde congregation have stepped up to provide food for firefighters and others in need through the local food bank they have been involved with for several years. The food bank delivers groceries to some 150 families every Thursday, but a recent Sunday eve-

ning found members gathered at the church, making breakfast burritos for firefighters. The next day they rose at 5 a.m. to reheat the burritos and deliver them to the fire station by 6:30.

“People are responding from far and wide,” Roberts said. “I just received a text from a former University of La Verne student who is now teaching high school in New Mexico. Her class wants to do a fundraiser for us here. And when we couldn’t find a 60-cup coffee maker, the Springfield (Ore.) Church of the Brethren had one sent to

us. It feels good to have this kind of support. It’s amazing how the help comes in. We’re feeling very cared for.”

Residents of Tonasket and others in north-central Washington realize the future remains uncertain as fires continue to ravage hillsides and even claim homes. “We’re waiting to see we can do next,” Roberts added. “Tonasket seems relatively safe at this point, though the fires are still not contained, so if the wind picks up or a new fire starts, we might be starting all over again.”

*Members of the Ellisforde Church of the Brethren prepare breakfast burritos for firefighters.*



## Church of the Brethren and EYN send condolences to Emanuel AME Church

**A letter from the Church of the Brethren**, signed by general secretary Stan Noffsinger and Intercultural Ministry director Gimbiya Kettering, and a letter from leaders of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), were sent to Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., after the shooting there on June 17.

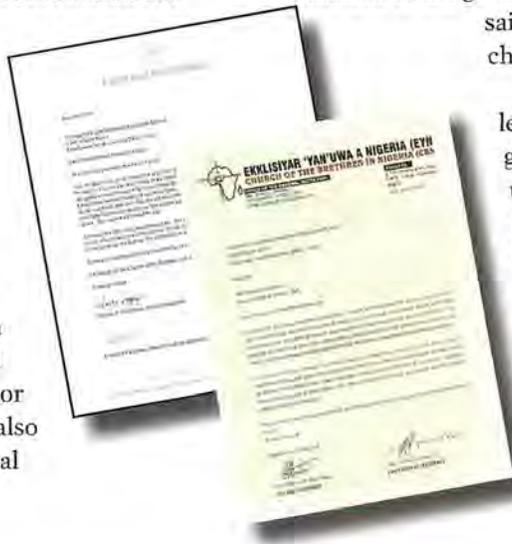
Copies of the two letters of condolence also were sent to the AME denominational headquarters, in care of senior bishop John R. Bryant and general secretary Jeffery Cooper.

The shooter who attacked during a Bible study at the historic African-American church murdered six women and three men, including pastor Clementa Pinckney who also was a state senator. Federal

authorities soon opened a hate crime investigation. "The only reason someone would walk into a church and shoot people that were praying is hate," said Charleston mayor Joe Riley, as quoted by CNN.

Emanuel AME Church is the oldest AME church in the South, founded in Charleston in 1816. It has a place in history as a center of civil rights activity. "It was born of discrimination, burned to the ground in hate, and rose again," said a CNN review of the church's history.

The letter from EYN leaders was sent through the general secretary's office of the Church of the Brethren in the United States, and expressed caring on behalf of the entire membership of EYN. It was signed by Mbode M. Ndirmbita, EYN vice president, and Jinatu L. Wamdeo, EYN general secretary.



## Dominican Brethren receive support for effort to naturalize Haitian members

**B**rethren Disaster Ministries has directed a grant of up to \$10,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) for the work of Iglesia de los Hermanos (the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic) to assist the naturalization of ethnic Haitians in the DR.

Additional funding of \$6,500 from the budget of Global Mission and Service, which comes out of the denomination's Core Ministries Fund, brings a total of up to \$16,500.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, and many people of Haitian descent live in the DR. In September 2013, a high level court denied Dominican nationality to children of undocumented migrants born or registered in the country after 1929, who do not have at least one Dominican parent. The ruling was made under a 2010 constitutional clause declaring these people to be either in the country illegally or in transit.

As a result, tens of thousands of people born in the DR to undocumented Haitian parents have been made stateless, jobless, and in need of international assistance. The Church of the Brethren in the DR has responded with a project to assist church members of Haitian descent to register and become naturalized in the DR.

## Upcoming events

**Sept. 7-11**

**National Older Adult Conference**, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

**Sept. 18-19** **Missouri**

**and Arkansas District Conference**, Roach, Mo.; **Northern Indiana District Conference**, Camp Mack, Milford, Ind.; **Southern Pennsylvania District Conference**, Ridge Church of the Brethren, Shippensburg, Pa.; **West Marva District Conference**, Moorefield (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren

**Sept. 19** **South/**

**Central Indiana District Conference**, Manchester (Ind.) Church of the Brethren

**Sept. 20-Oct. 9**

**Brethren Volunteer Service fall orientation**

**Sept. 20** **Mission**

**Offering Emphasis**

**Sept. 21** **International**

**Day of Prayer for Peace**

**Sept. 25-27** **Pacific**

**Northwest District Conference**, Camp Myrtlewood, Myrtle Point, Ore.

**Oct. 3** **Atlantic**

**Northeast District Conference**, Leffler Chapel at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

**Oct. 9-10** **Atlantic**

**Southeast District Conference**, Camp Ithiel, Gotha, Fla.; **Idaho District Conference**, Fruitland (Idaho) Church of the Brethren; **Mid-Atlantic District Conference**, Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren; **Middle Pennsylvania District Conference**, Martinsburg (Pa.) Memorial Church of the Brethren; **Southern Ohio District Conference**, Happy Corner Church of the Brethren, Clayton, Ohio



Glenn Hiegel

# Junior high conference helps youth address change

by Josh Harbeck

**A**n acorn. Small, ordinary, even insignificant. Yet that small seed transforms into a massive, rooted, solid oak tree.

That transformation was the metaphor for change used by the organizers of the 2015 National Junior High Conference held June 19-21 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The message came through clearly.

The conference theme was based on Romans 12:1-2 which, in *The Message* paraphrase, states, “Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.”

Organizers, including director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Becky Ullom Naugle, acknowledged the changes ju-

nior high youth go through and reminded them to keep their focus on God. “We were thinking about different images for change,” she said. “The acorn starts so small and insignificant, but it becomes a mighty oak tree. We thought that could help the kids see long-term. It’s not about how you look or what you have. God’s looking at other things.”

Brethren Volunteer Service worker Kristen Hoffman, who coordinated the conference, said she wanted the students to feel energized. “We wanted to focus on their gifts and talents and have them fueled by that and ready to go back to their junior highs,” she said.

Unrealistic expectations can cause one to lose focus, said Lauren Seganos, a seminary student at the Memorial Church of Harvard University, and member of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa. “We’re in a culture where everyone needs to be the best at everything, and it’s worse today than when I was a child,” she said during the opening worship. “I think it’s important to not focus on being the best necessarily, but focus on what brings you joy, because when we’re doing something that comes from our heart, that pleases God.”

Other speakers included Bethany Theological Seminary academic dean Steve Schweitzer; Amy Gall Ritchie, a former pastor who works with students at Bethany Seminary; and Pacific Southwest District moderator Eric Bishop. In addition to giving the closing message for the conference, Bishop also led a leaders and youth in a discussion about violence and race, drawing upon the recent shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

“It’s been a good and healthy place for kids to be over the weekend,” Ullom Naugle observed at the conclusion of the conference.

Josh Harbeck teaches junior high youth at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill.



Glenn Hiegel

## \$70,500 in EDF grants directed to Burundi refugee crisis

**Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed another grant** from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) totaling \$70,500 to the Burundi refugee crisis. This funding is in addition to a grant of \$11,500 that was made in June.

“Since April, Burundians have been fleeing their country following election violence and a failed coup, which has led to the deterioration of safety and security,” explained the Brethren Disaster Ministries grant request. “This has led to significant displacement towards surrounding countries, with the largest influx of refugees—more than 50,000—arriving in Tanzania.”

An allocation of \$60,000 is supporting Church World Service (CWS) humanitarian assistance for Burundi refugees in Tanzania, where living conditions at the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp have become dire as existing facilities are inadequate. “Tensions have arisen between the newly arriving Burundian refugees and the Congolese refugees, some of whom have lived there for 20 years,” the grant request said.

The grant supports local partners of CWS in providing emergency aid for more than 50,000 individuals over the next year, including safe water, appropriate sanitation and hygiene, shelter, household supplies, protection for women and girls, and psychosocial support.

A grant of \$10,500 is directed to the Shalom Ministry for Reconciliation and Development of the Congolese Brethren, which received the previous allocation of \$11,500. The ministry is pro-

viding 350 refugee families with emergency food including corn flour, beans, cooking oil, and salt. This most recent grant supports a second phase of the response, which includes the distribution of laundry soap, household and cooking supply kits, and clothing for the 350 households, which represent 2,800 people.

Find out more about the Emergency Disaster Fund at [www.brethren.org/edf](http://www.brethren.org/edf).



## Personnel changes

**Stephen Coetzee** is the new president and CEO at Fahrney-Keedy Home and Village, a Church of the Brethren retirement community near Boonsboro, Md. After a regional and national executive search, Coetzee was selected for his 25 years of senior healthcare experience, proven financial management, and background in expanding continuing care retirement communities.

**Connie Bohn** has been hired as part-time hospitality assistant at the Zigler Hospitality Center at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. She brings to the job more than 20 years of experience as a secretary and receptionist, including her work as secretary for the New Windsor Conference Center

1999-2011, before it was closed.

**Monica Rice** has added responsibilities as coordinator for Alumni/ae Relations to her existing duties as administrative assistant of Institutional Advancement and coordinator of Congregational Relations at Bethany Theological Seminary. As part of her new duties, she will foster a program of mutual support between the seminary and Brethren congregations.

The Workcamp Ministry has announced assistant coordinators for the 2016 season: **Deanna Beckner** of Columbia City (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, and **Amanda McLearn-Montz** of Panther Creek Church of the Brethren in Adel, Iowa. Beckner gradu-

ated from Manchester University in May with a degree in communication studies. McLearn-Montz graduated from Tulane University in May with a degree in Spanish and public health. The two assistant coordinators began their work in August to plan for the 2016 workcamp season.

**Kelley Brenneman** has concluded her year of service as intern for the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. The BHLA has welcomed **Aaron Neff** as archival intern for 2015 to 2016. He is a member of New Covenant Church of the Brethren in Gotha, Fla., and a graduate of Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., where he earned a bachelor of arts in history and a bachelor of arts in music.

# Becoming stonecatchers

**W**hat can I say to convince you to read this book? Nothing I can say could top what Desmond Tutu wrote as a blurb on the book jacket: “*Just Mercy* should be read by people of conscience in every civilized country in the world to discover what happens when revenge and retribution replace justice and mercy.”

Bryan Stevenson, the author of *Just Mercy*, has worked for decades to bring hope to prisoners who received unjust sentences. As executive director of Equal Justice Initiative and as a law professor, he is passionate about assisting people who have not had the financial resources to obtain adequate legal representation.



KEN GIBBLE

This book is informative. I learned that, in 1970, 300,000 citizens in our country were in prison. Now that number stands at 2.3 million people. In that time a quarter of a million children have been sentenced to prison. Our country has 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. One in every 15

people born in our country in 2001 will go to jail or prison. One in every three black male babies born today can expect to be incarcerated (for the white population it is one in 15). I find those numbers sobering, almost incomprehensible.

But *Just Mercy* is not a book about statistics. What makes this book such a powerful reading experience is how the author translates facts and figures into deeply human stories. The centerpiece story belongs to Walter McMillian. In 1987, McMillian, an African-American, was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to death for the murder of Ronda Morrison, an 18-year-old white college student in Alabama. As we move through the book, we learn who Walter McMillian was: a boy who grew up in the rural South, a husband and a father, an owner of a small but successful business, and a man who found himself convicted as a murderer and sent to death row.

When Bryan Stevenson met Walter McMillian and learned his story, he began to investigate the evidence that had been used in court against him. It didn’t take him long to conclude

that a terrible injustice had been done. Dozens of people Stevenson talked to confirmed that the convicted man had been with them when the murder was committed. And so began the long, arduous process of trying to undo the injustice that Stevenson was convinced had been handed down by the judicial system. Those efforts uncovered an almost unbelievable tangle of lies, political corruption, conspiracy, and racial bigotry. Without revealing how McMillian’s story ends, I will say only that you cannot read his story without being deeply moved.

The author draws on his own story to help the reader understand his motivation for his work with the poor, the disenfranchised, those whom society has pushed aside. He was 13 years old when his grandfather was stabbed to death by teenagers who had broken into his apartment to steal his television set. Stevenson and his family struggled to make sense of what had happened. He writes of that time: “We all kept saying and thinking the same thing: They didn’t have to kill him.” It was only decades later, as he began to represent children who had committed crimes, that he finally began to understand that young teens do not have the maturity, independence, and future orientation that adults have. Stevenson appeared before the US Supreme Court to argue successfully against life-without-parole sentences for children, a ruling handed down in May 2010.

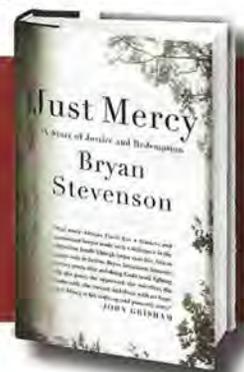
Near the end of the book, Stevenson tells about attending a church meeting to talk about his work. Realizing that not everyone present shared his anti-death-penalty views, he recounted the story of Jesus and the woman accused of adultery and threatened with death by stoning. He told them that Jesus’ response is still relevant because today our self-righteousness, fear, and anger have caused even Christians to hurl stones at people who fall down, even when we know we should forgive and show compassion. He said that we cannot simply stand by and watch that happen. Instead we should be “stonecatchers.”

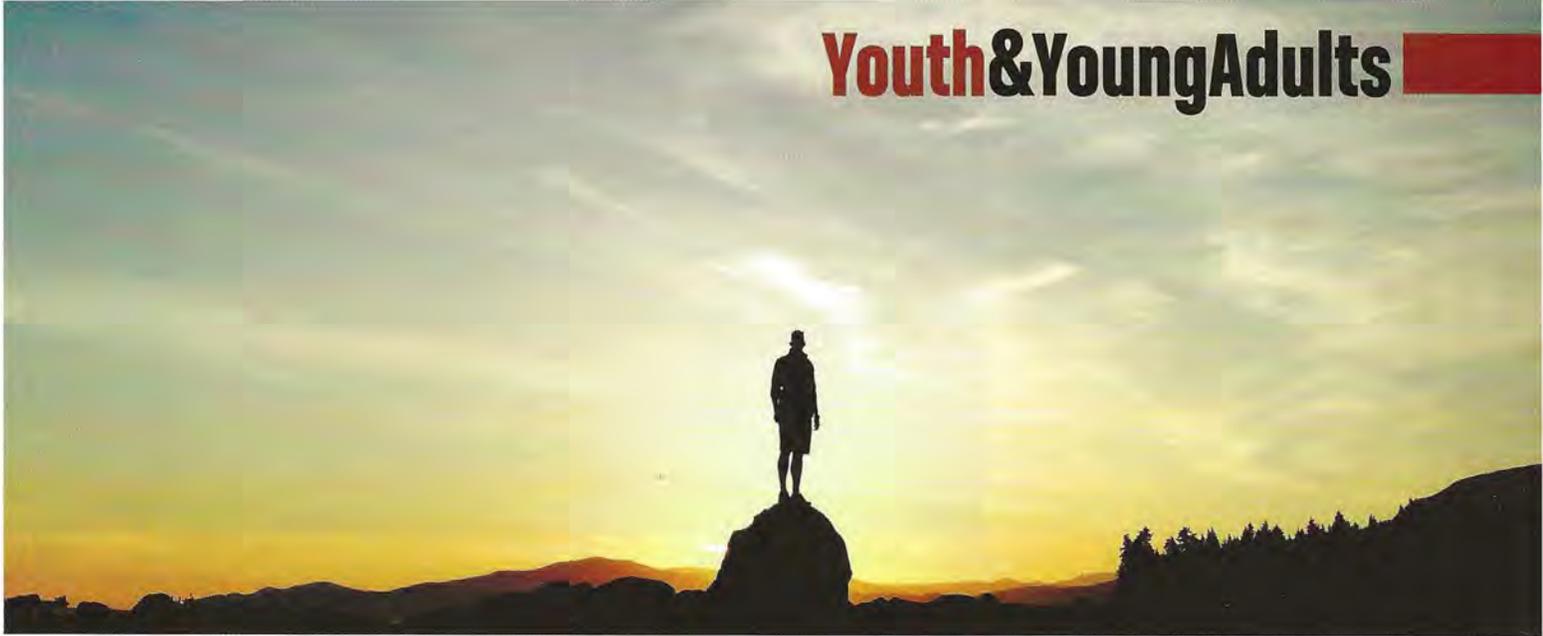
Read this book and I predict you will ask yourself what you can do to be a “stonecatcher.”

Ken Gible, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor, writes from Camp Hill, Pa. You can read more on his blog at [www.kenslines.blogspot.com](http://www.kenslines.blogspot.com).

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *Just Mercy*. **Author:** Bryan Stevenson. **Publisher:** Spiegel and Giroux, New York, Oct. 21, 2014. **Number of pages:** 352. **Price:** \$28 (hardcover). In a “Sunday Book Review” column for *The New York Times*, Ted Conniver said, “The message of this book, hammered home by dramatic examples of one man’s refusal to sit quietly and countenance horror, is that evil can be overcome, a difference can be made. *Just Mercy* will make you upset and it will make you hopeful.”





## Remember to build on a rock

by Emmett Eldred

**A**t the summer camp where I have worked as a counselor and lifeguard, we often sing a song about a wise man and a foolish man. You've probably sung it too. The wise man built his house upon the rock; the foolish man built his house upon the sand. When the rain came down and the floods came up, the wise man's house stood firm, but the foolish man's house went splat.

I like this fun, silly song, but sometimes I worry that we don't do a good enough job of explaining its context. When we sing this song, we're not giving out construction advice. We're actually quoting Jesus! Matthew 7: 24-27, to be exact—the final passage in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. After three chapters of teaching, Jesus relates those who follow his words to the wise man, and those who ignore his words to the foolish man. If we follow Jesus' teachings, we have built our lives and our relationship with God on a solid foundation. If we don't follow Jesus, our faith is shaky and our belief in God fragile.

I think we've stripped Jesus away from his full context, too. Most of us are on board with the whole salvation thing. If we confess Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we are "saved," and we get to go to heaven. Great! But how many of us actually follow Jesus in the way we live our lives? Jesus isn't just an arbiter of what happens to us after we die. He is God with us, who shapes—or should shape—our entire identity. He is Lord! He reigns! His Kingdom is here on earth, right now!

In our modern, militaristic culture, how many of us have ignored Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount about violence? "Do not resist an evil-doer," and "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

In our modern, consumer culture, how many of us have ignored Jesus' teachings about wealth and possessions? "Do

not store up for yourself treasures on Earth," and "You cannot serve both God and money?"

In our modern, laissez-faire culture, how many of us have ignored Jesus' commandment to love actively, not passively? "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

It's easy to profess Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, but much harder to pronounce him the Lord of our actions. It's convenient to be saved by Christ, but inconvenient to be disciples of Christ. I hope we in the Church of the Brethren will continue to become better disciples of Jesus, striving humbly and passionately to implement his teaching into action. After all, Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."

Let us bravely seek peace and build it while denouncing violence with prophetic vigor. Let us scale back our own possessions and consumption, so we have more to give to others and we can reverse our negative impact on the environment and the world's poor. Let us defy a culture of selfishness, instead endeavoring to live generous, selfless lives of compassion. 

Emmett Eldred, a junior at Carnegie Mellon University, and a member of the Hollidaysburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, served on the denomination's National Youth Cabinet. Following the inspirational speech by Jarrod McKenna at last year's National Youth Conference, he founded [DunkerPunks.com](http://DunkerPunks.com) where he blogs and invites others to contribute as well. He also was the catalyst behind a project to send 1,000 letters in support of [Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa](http://EkklesiyarYan'uwa) a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Find out more at [www.dunkerpunks.com](http://www.dunkerpunks.com).



# Sacred surprises

**L**ast evening was warm and clear as six dear friends gathered on my big old, wrap-around porch. An overly full summer had kept us apart longer than we'd intended, so we'd made a special point of setting aside this night to get together.

There was no ceremony in our gathering. We trickled in from work and meetings, tired but comfortable. With no plan but to spend time together, we ordered pizza, ate a giant bowl of the ripest summer fruit, and indulged in a Tupperware container of cookies that someone had pulled out of their freezer and baked. It was the simplest meal in its utility, and it was perfect, because all we had to do was be there.



**MANDY GARCIA**

I'm sure that all of my neighbors could hear us laughing as we told stories. We sat in wicker chairs and old wooden rockers arranged in a haphazard circle as the sun went down, and I suddenly became aware that my porch had been transformed into a sacred space. In the quiet of a Wednesday dusk, gathered around a candle and a table full of food, my friends and I accidentally found ourselves having church. We broke bread and listened to each other's hearts; we passed the peace and hugs and "I love you's," and we shared bags of excess garden tomatoes—and I'm sure that God was glorified.

So often it is in those moments that have been stripped of everything but a pure desire to be in God-honoring community when I have to catch my breath, surprised by their fullness and beauty. May we be ever-watchful for those surprises of the sacred, slipped into the simplest of moments in our lives, and may we cherish them for the fact that all we had to do was be there to live them. **W**

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



## Grilled tomato salad

*This is one of my favorite ways to prepare late summer tomatoes at the peak of their flavor.*

### Ingredients for two:

- 10–20 small tomatoes
- One half of a large red onion
- 2 oz. feta cheese
- Fresh herbs like basil, oregano, and/or chives
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

### Instructions:

Prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Cut the red onion into large chunks and thread them onto two grill-safe skewers. Skewer a variety of small, whole tomatoes onto another set of skewers.

Grill the onions for five minutes before adding the tomatoes to the grill for another five. Pull all the skewers off the grill after about 10 minutes, when the onions have a nice char and the tomatoes are blistered but not burst.

Mix all the vegetables in a bowl, drizzle with good-tasting olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toss with crumbled feta cheese and plenty of fresh herbs. Serve with sweet sun tea and crusty bread for a perfect porch snack, or with grilled chicken or fish for a main dish. Add a handful of grilled green beans and serve over rice for a summery vegetarian main.

## Troubled by spanking metaphor

The May MESSENGER Bible study, “Lessons From Gift Giving,” has been a gift to me. Since reading it, I’ve daily leaned upon many of the lessons offered from the author’s time with little ones. However, as a child advocate, I stumbled over the spanking metaphor. It made me wonder how many people know that social science research concludes that spanking does not work. As a parent, I try to focus on the loving guidance schools of thought—including such jargon as positive discipline, firm but respectful limit setting, and imposing natural consequences—that seem most in harmony with Jesus’ way of teaching. Raising children and working in community are both, without a doubt, challenging, but as pacifists, we are

called to seek out nonviolent solutions. My foremost prayer is that each child of God is treated with the love of God, but I also encourage care that our rhetoric upholds our hope for God’s world.

**Suzanne Lay**  
Falls Church, Va.

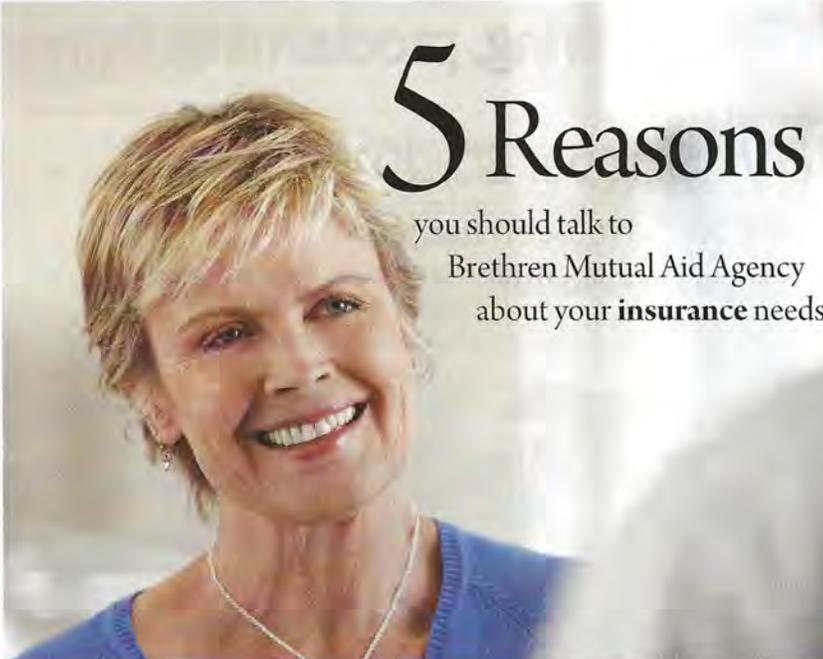
## Not imitators of Islam

I am surprised that no one has challenged Brother Guy Wampler’s article, “Where is the Prince of Peace?” (May 2015). Boko Haram and ISIS are not an imitation of Islam; they are Islam. They are doing exactly what the Koran says for them to do. They are killing those whom they consider to be infidels. They are funded by Islamic nations. ISIS and Boko Haram are not caused by social problems; they

are caused by religious problems.

From 1956 to 1960, I was the elder in charge of both of the small churches in the Chibok tribe in northern Nigeria. We were more than 400 miles from any grocery store, and there was no doctor within 100 miles. Of the 276 girls kidnapped at Chibok, I considered 184 of them to be my girls, and I believe they have been sold into sexual slavery in Muslim countries. I feel these are my people that the Muslims have killed and caused to flee their homes. It is time that the thinking toward these terrible people should be honest and straightforward. I am sorry that neither the churches nor our government are willing to recognize the causes of the problems that we are facing.

**Paul Petcher**  
Millry, Ala.



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## Plenty of evidence

In the June MESSENGER, Randy Costner suggests the human-caused climate change lacks evidence, since previous letter writers have not cited actual studies. Perhaps previous letter writers did not cite specific studies because there are so many to choose from, and most are easily available to anyone with access to the Internet or a university library. Nonetheless, allow me to point others in promising directions, if they are interested in looking at the science. NASA has a fine website concerning climate change called "Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet" (<http://climate.nasa.gov>). It is written for non-scientists, but provides many references to scientific research. I would also recommend *Climate Change Science: A Modern Synthesis*, by G. Thomas Farmer and John Cook (Springer, 2013). This book contains information not only on the science in support of human-caused climate change,

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but also information about the climate change denial movement. Finally, I would encourage interested persons to read more about the climate change denial movement in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, especially chapter 10: "Organized Climate Change Denial," by Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright (Oxford University Press, 2013).

All of this matters to us as God's people who are called to "till and keep" creation. It also matters because of the great suffering likely to befall millions of people if we fail to take action. At the same time, we should recognize that a shift away from fossil fuels will disrupt the lives of those who are economically and emotionally tied to the industry, such as coal miners and oil field workers. Compassion requires us to acknowledge their losses as well.

**Jim Benedict**  
New Windsor, Md.

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## Discover it for yourselves

In his letter to *MESSENGER* in June 2015, Randy Costner quotes Leslie Woodcock of the University of Manchester (England) concerning climate change. If you go to Woodcock's website, you will find that the heart of his argument is: "There is no reproducible evidence CO<sub>2</sub> has significantly increased in the last 100 years." If you go to his critics' websites, you will discover that "Carbon dioxide concentrations are very easy to measure." And "it's

being done in hundreds of places across the globe." You will also discover that CO<sub>2</sub> is increasing exponentially in the last hundred years, and that scientists attribute that to the burning of fossil fuels. Readers, go to the websites. Discover it for yourselves! Even Pope Francis has done so! The scientific evidence for human-caused climate change is overwhelming, contrary to Leslie Woodcock, who is a retired chemical engineer.

**Bob McFadden**  
Bridgewater, Va.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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

Remember how good it feels to give a gift of great value? The joy of real, cheerful giving. No cast-offs, no leftovers, just our very best given in love. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we taught our children in that same spirit? Prayerfully anticipating our time together, to share with them the goodness of God. So let's reassess our priorities. Let's give it our all and make it special. Let's teach our kids to shine in this world.

\* Start small



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

## New Members

**Annville, Pa.:** Joel Edward Ballew, Linetta Shalom Alley Ballew, Amanda Jo Rambler-Wampler, Liam James Nyce

**Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio:** Marisha Randolph, Aleena Raker, Michael Raker

**Brooklyn, First, Brooklyn, N.Y.:** Julia Rosa Gonzalez, Joshua Tomas Gonzalez, Matthew Phill Gonzalez, Jean Rosemarie Sherwood

**Chambersburg, Pa.:** Albert Corman, Patricia Corman

**Codorus, Dallastown, Pa.:** Kate McKinley, Marissa Godfrey, Elizabeth Godfrey, Dakota Baley, Drew Binkley, Mikayla Joines

**Coventry, Pottstown, Pa.:** Carla Kulb, John Frownfelter, Corbin Pignoli, Mark Muthler, Tracy Muthler, Leah Muthler, Matthew Muthler, Hannah Kulp, Mary Kulp, Natalie Rude, John Christman, Nancy Christman

**Crest Manor, South Bend, Ind.:** J. Ronald Mummert, Constance Mummert, Graciela Fourman

**Denton, Md.:** Jessica Bowdle

**East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.:** Calla Stoltzfus, Kyle Flora, Jennifer Flora, Sheree Dietz, Gary Dietz

**Fairview, Cordova, Md.:** Annadrew Gresh, Frieden Gresh

**Frederick, Md.:** Kelli Autz, Pepper Bowins, Pierre Bowins Ben Byrd, Sherrie Byrd, Valerie Gordon, Hank House, Eirik Kellogg, Talisha Kellogg, Faye Lucas, Dave McVicker, Rhona McVicker, Calvin Park, Mandy Park, Shawn Raup, Linda Revolinsky, Richard Revolinsky

**Garden City, Kan.:** Peggy Flynn

**Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.:** Rick Funk, Debbie Bruchey, Willie Bruchey, Donna Myers, Jessica Taylor

**Harrisonburg, Va.:** John Mark Logan, Cheryl Logan, Amelia Martinez, Don Moyers, Ginny Moyers, Matt Painter, Andrew Painter, Bethany Painter, Daphyne Thomas, Rachel Thomas

**Hatfield, Pa.:** Robert Cleveland, Dan Sibley

**Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.:** Heather Dick, Mark Kaufman, Christian Layman, Dave Lugar, Luisa Munoz, Katherine Witbeck

**His Way, Mills River, N.C.:** Zulema Hernandez Salgado, Johanna Mendoza

**Lancaster, Pa.:** Robert Breneman, MaryAnn Breneman, Laura Hackenberger, Randy Mohler, Marianna Rhoades

**Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.:** Abigail Christ, Malachi Christ, Caitlin Henning, Joshua Henning, Kyle Yenser, Michael W. Mattson, Julie Tobias, Penny Neff

**Madison, Brightwood, Va.:** Perry Sommers, Irene Sommers, Jaymes Dodson, Scott Goode, Bob Powell

**Manassas, Va.:** Samuel Aylesworth, Ted Barkley, Chris Bowman, Sherry Bowman, James Earl, Nancy Earl, James Frankart, Judy Frankart, Gary Harris, Susan Harris, Paul Vaughn

**Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio:** Morgan Bednar, Jesse Keener, Gavin Manion

**McPherson, Kan.:** Emmy Goering, Janelle Flory Schrock, Daniel Reynolds, Grace van Asselt

**Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa.:** Ed Heidinger II, Joshua Sample, Hunter Sample, Noah Wood, Austin O'Donnell, Wade Davis, Eric Newswanger, Kim Newswanger, Jacoby Kreider, Christian Davis, Addison O'Donnell, Jackson Houghton, Linda Frank, Keeley Kreider, Kourtney Krantz, Gloria Brian, Tristan Smith

**Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.:** Bill Hess, Garrett Miller, Jim Smith

**Modesto, Calif.:** Mason Wright

**Oakton, Vienna, Va.:** Charlotte Carr Glen, Shirley Ruth Carr, Casey Comer, Cortland Comer, Eric Finet, Joey Gonzalez, Miller Evans Kines, Bobby Schultz, Evan Strong, Michael Biddle

**Peace, Portland, Ore.:** Eric Switzer, Robert Dickinson, Adrienne Dickinson

**Roaring Spring, First, Roaring Spring, Pa.:** Alyssa Bianconi, Sage Evans, Mya Giordano, Amanda Holsinger, Cobee Shuff, Coty Thompson

**West Charleston, Tipp City, Ohio:** Madison Adduci, Alex Adduci, Bryseydi Diaz, Yeysi Diaz, Amanda Knox

**West York, York, Pa.:** Alana Grove, Edward Heiland, Hunter Eshbach, Dawson Eshbach

## Anniversaries

**Auwarter, Rodney and Janice, Grottoes, Va., 60**

**Ball, Darryl and Shirley, Garden City, Kan., 55**

**Bennett, Roger and Betty, Middletown, Md., 50**

**Bowman, Paul and Donna, York, Pa., 50**

**Bucher, Wilbur and Annette, Lancaster, Pa., 67**

**Cline, Bill and Mary, Waynesboro, Va., 65**

**Dean, Vernon and Edna, Franklin Grove, Ill., 60**

**Despeaux, Ed and Joan, Thurmont, Md., 60**

**Eisenbent, Ben and Sondra, Manheim, Pa., 50**

**Elliott, Delbert and Betty, Oakland, Md., 55**

**Elliott, Larry and Donna, Fort Collins, Colo., 50**

**Faus, Glen and Sheryl, Manheim, Pa., 55**

**Fogle, Kenny and Betty, Frederick, Md., 55**

**Gibble, Marvin and Nancy, Seven Valleys, Pa., 55**

**Good, Monroe and Ada, Lancaster, Pa., 70**

**Hallock, Ted and Mary Edith, Frederick, Md., 55**

**Hawkins, Tom and Gayle Flory, Nokesville, Va., 60**

**Herr, John and Theresa, Lancaster, Pa., 65**

**Hostetler, Jerry and Ida, Somerset, Pa., 60**

**Johansen, Robert and Ruthann Knechel, Granger, Ind., 50**

**Keener, Harold and Nancy, Ashland, Ohio, 50**

**Kreiner, Gary and Julie, Elizabethtown, Pa., 50**

**Loving, Burl and Marie, Garden City, Kan., 68**

**Lowe, Clarence and Joyce, Mount Joy, Pa., 55**

**Lutz, Ivan and Lois, Lititz, Pa., 60**

**Martin, Ervin and Shirley, Switzer, Robert Dickinson, Gordonville, Pa., 50**

**Martin, William and Elizabeth, Lititz, Pa., 50**

**Mercer, Eddie and Belva, Frederick, Md., 55**

**Miller, Edwin and Clara, Oakland, Md., 50**

**Moser, Glenn and Shirley, Middletown, Md., 60**

**Nycc, Al and Betty Lou, Harleysville, Pa., 55**

**Pilson, Roy and Louise, Staunton, Va., 60**

**Powell, James and Kay, Akron, Ohio, 50**

**Reed, Marvin and Patricia, Purcellville, Va., 50**

**Rogers, Ray and Sue, Waynesboro, Va., 50**

**Rohr, Robert and Ferne, Staunton, Va., 69**

**Seidel, Robert and Carolyn, Clifton, Va., 50**

**Shallenberger, Clyde and Helen, Cockeysville, Md., 65**

**Simmons, Vernon and Cleo, Staunton, Va., 69**

**Smith, Karlton and Peg, Phoenixville, Pa., 65**

**Smoker, Earl and Vera, Ephrata, Pa., 65**

**Snyder, Charles R. and Sheryl D., New Oxford, Pa., 50**

**Spitler, Dale and Esther, Troy, Ohio, 65**

**Sproles, Gerry and Peggy, Nokesville, Va., 60**

**Stauffer, J. Richard and Myra, Lancaster, Pa., 67**

**Stinebaugh, Vernon H., and Angela S., Lancaster, Pa., 73**

**Sweigart, Richard and Gloria, Lititz, Pa., 60**

**Walter, Guy and Bonnie, Frederick, Md., 50**

**Wampler, Guy and Linda, Lancaster, Pa., 50**

**Young, Fred and Pat, Frederick, Md., 60**

## Deaths

**Appl, Henry Leon, 91, Waynesboro, Va., July 18**

**Archart, Harry Elwood, 78, Stuarts Draft, Va., June 3**

**Aultman, Loretta Coffman, 84, The Villages, Fla., May 15**

**Aument, Murl E., 75, Quarryville, Pa., Nov. 2, 2014**

**Baer, Fred Leroy, 82, Friedens, Pa., June 19**

**Bailey, Esther Schrock, 94, Modesto, Calif., June 8**

**Baker, Verlin Wright, 92, Waynesboro, Va., June 26**

**Barber, Betty Jean, 87, Taneytown, Md., Aug. 28, 2014**

**Bartlett, Flora, 91, Collier, Pa., April 21**

**Base, Velma, 86, Garden City, Kan., May 9**

**Baughman, Daniel, 89, Quarryville, Pa., May 21**

**Baughman, Harold M., 70, Lancaster, Pa., April 10**

**Beal, Naomi, 100, Des Moines, Iowa, July 18**

**Benner, Mary Lou, 84, Glenshaw, Pa., May 12**

**Black, Laurie Sheeler, 54, Lititz, Pa., May 5**

**Blickenstaff, Mildred I. Leatherman, 91, Myersville, Md., June 20, 2014**

**Blumenauer, Betty Joyce Snyder, 81, Frederick, Md., June 27**

**Bollinger, Miriam E. Witmer, 96, Lancaster, Pa., June 1**

**Bowyer, Hilda S., 85, Vinton, Va., March 6**

**Bright, Thomas R., Jr., 63, South Bend, Ind., Feb. 5**

**Brower, Sterling Leroy, 90, Springfield, Ore., June 3**

**Brown, Lois Darlene Kauffman, 89, Lombard, Ill., May 14**

**Bucher, Ruth Ulrich, 97, Quarryville, Pa., Nov. 2, 2014**

**Bushong, J. Mark, 87, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 13**

**Callahan, Wanda S. Luce, 90, Goshen, Ind., May 30**

**Carlson, G. Elwood, 92, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Feb. 16**

**Castle, Erma Jean, 87, Dixon, Ill., June 29**

**Clapper, Kathryn, 89, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Jan. 23**

**Clark, Robert B., 81, Quarryville, Pa., April 18**

**Craun, Homer Ashby, Jr., 90, Waynesboro, Va., June 16**

**Custer, Bertha Lucille, 95, North Manchester, Ind., July 11**

**Decker, Ruth Parnell, 99, Champaign, Ill., June 2**

- Despeaux**, Virginia L. Garver, 94, Thurmont, Md., Jan. 10
- Diaz**, Virginia, 85, LaVerne, Calif., July 3
- Dibert**, Mary C. Hoffman, 79, Frederick, Md. June 5
- Dice**, Mary Ellen Cooper, 79, Harman, W.Va., March 27
- Fallwell**, Ronald Lee, 76, Frederick, Md., Jan. 29
- Fifer**, Carson Lee, 81, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 4, 2014
- Fourman**, C. Darlene, 76, Eaton, Ohio, March 19
- Frasso**, Helen, 94, Reading, Pa., May 23
- Frick**, Irene Louise, 94, Modesto, Calif., April 29
- Gaver**, Maynard Emory, 85, Middlepoint, Md., Feb. 11
- Good**, Douglas Walker, 80, Grottoes, Va., June 1
- Greaser**, Annette J., 87, Martinsburg, Pa., May 29
- Grossnickle**, Ruby, 94, Jefferson, Md., March 2
- Grossnickle**, Thomas Jay, 60, Taylors Island, Md., April 16
- Hampton**, Albert Leo, 78, Wenatchee, Wash., June 5
- Hartman**, James T., 77, Sinking Spring, Pa., March 23
- Harvey**, Norman L., Jr., 65, Somerset, Pa., May 25
- Hayes**, Molly Erin, 32, Woodsboro, Md., April 17
- Henderson**, Everette, 101, Mount Morris, Ill., June 11
- Hendricks**, Merle M., 87, Tecumseh, Mich., June 23
- Hess**, Katherine A. Hays, 65, Ashland, Ohio, June 4
- Hollinger**, E. Robert, 64, Lancaster, Pa., June 20
- Hoover**, Gordon, 80, Willow Street, Pa., April 4
- Horn**, Evelyn E. Bywaters, 89, York, Pa., April 2
- Horner**, Elizabeth A., 64, Windber, Pa., July 1
- Huffaker**, David L., 81, West Milton, Ohio, July 14
- James**, Wuerthner Vonne, Sr., 85, Dayton, Ohio, July 31
- Johnson**, William Avery, Sr., 92, Crab Orchard, W.Va., May 23
- Kemmerer**, Mary Ann Landis, 78, Dayton, Ohio, Jan. 13
- Kerkove**, Helen Maria, 68, South English, Iowa, June 15
- Kister**, Beatrice Krepelka, 77, Berlin, Pa., May 19
- Klingler**, Susan Beth, 60, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 9, 2014
- Kreider**, Stanley E., 92, Quarryville, Pa., July 4, 2014
- Layman**, Ivy J., Jr., 80, Rocky Mount, Va., May 24
- Leatherman**, Glendoris Jane Bussard, 85, Myersville, Md., Feb. 3
- Lee**, Helen Ann Ericksen, 76, Daleville, Va., May 28
- Lehman**, Elmer R., 92, Salem, Ohio, May 13
- Libby**, Paul Everard, 93, Portland, Ore., May 14
- Light**, Adam E., 96, Palmyra, Pa., June 8
- Lochman**, June Segeler, 93, South Elgin, Ill., March 12
- Lohr**, Joseph A., Jr., 81, Windber, Pa., June 13
- Lutz**, Lisa, 51, Ambler, Pa., June 27
- Marcum**, Mary Ruth Weybright, 90, Ijamsville, Md., March 26
- Mauck**, Lloyd Edward, Sr., 85, Frederick, Md., Feb. 4
- McCleary**, Lois Jean, 81, Chambersburg, Pa., June 8
- McKibban**, Dixie Faye, 93, Chillicothe, Ohio, April 22
- Michael**, Ronnie Bruce, 71, Mount Solon, Va., Jan. 8
- Moser**, George A., 90, Middletown, Md., Feb. 2
- Neher**, Gerald A., 84, McPherson, Kan., May 25
- Nelson**, Robert J., Jr., 97, North Manchester, Ind., July 10
- Neufert**, Helen, 95, New Oxford, Pa., June 7
- Olivieri**, Michael, 91, Roaring Spring, Pa., June 16
- Orebaugh**, Warren S., 89, Stuarts Draft, Va., April 12
- Ours**, Janie R., 78, Harman, W.Va., June 9
- Paddock**, Sherri Lee Guyer, 54, Independence, Mo., May 28
- Pfutz**, Daryl F., 74, Franklin Grove, Ill., March 22
- Popp**, Olga Buday, 96, Windber, Pa., June 12
- Reed**, Alvis Edwin, 94, Floyd, Va., May 16
- Reed**, Galen Lester, 62, Roanoke, Va., May 22
- Reinoehl**, Josephine Burger, 102, North Manchester, Ind., June 13
- Reynold**, Muriel A. Rust, 83, York, Pa., Nov. 17, 2014
- Richards**, Glen William, 89, Ruckersville, Va., May 6
- Rodeffer**, Jerry Dean, 60, Snohomish, Wash., July 19
- Schumacher**, Bernice Anstine, 91, Hartville, Ohio, May 24
- Seldomridge**, Doris J. Martin, 84, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 13
- Shankle**, Betty Louise Thrasher, 79, Frederick, Md., March 3
- Shenk**, Elizabeth Brill, 96, Manheim, Pa., June 5
- Shewman**, Carol Ann Dickey, 75, Akron, Ind., May 17
- Shively**, Sherlo Dean, 88, Bakersfield, Calif., May 19
- Smith**, Marjorie Lois, 87, Garden City, Kan., July 11
- Snavely**, Conrad, 97, North Manchester, Ind., July 19
- Sowers**, Beatrice Grace, 85, Brunswick, Md., March 16
- Stager**, Margaret May Loy, 101, Greenville, Ohio, Jan. 2
- Stoltz**, Mary Lou Lechrone, 81, Somerset, Ohio, July 3
- Stoner**, Wayne M., 85, Mechanicsburg, Pa., May 17
- Sтрите**, Galen Eugene, 81, Middletown, Md., March 23
- Swisher**, Aletha D., 89, Frederick, Md., Oct. 26, 2014
- Thill**, Betty M. Keppen, 84, Lena, Ill., Feb. 18
- Thorne**, Eleanor Sybil Smith, 76, Palmyra, Pa., May 26
- Thralls**, Michael LaVerne, 64, Billings, Okla., Feb. 10
- Tucker**, Viva Turnbo, 98, Cushing, Okla., May 18
- Van Buren**, Mariann Moore, 73, Waynesboro, Va., June 12
- Wagner**, Nevin S., 91, New Oxford, Pa., April 28
- Waltho**, Martha Verona McHaddon, 90, Kittanning, Pa., Feb. 28
- Wanner**, Sharon, 74, Sinking Spring, Pa., May 25
- Warfield**, Roland Martin, 92, Frederick, Md., Nov. 23, 2014
- Weeks**, Irene Edith Garber, 91, Keymar, Md., June 11
- Wells**, Harvey Curtis, Sr., 91, Chatham, Va., June 1
- Weyand**, Alyce A., 83, Somerset, Pa., June 2
- Whitacre**, Margaret Young, 81, Bridgewater, Va., July 5
- Wildasin**, Emory Burnell, 89, New Oxford, Pa., May 29
- Wiles**, Truman P., 89, Eugene, Ore., April 18
- Wilson**, Joan M. Kline, 66, West Lawn, Pa., Feb. 18
- Wilson**, Ralph H., 82, Lewistown, Pa., June 21
- Wygall**, Lydia Johnson, 72, Salem, Va., June 27
- Yinger**, Betty Isabel Moss, 85, Frederick, Md., Jan. 8
- Yingst**, Martha Jane Wackler, 92, Greenville, Ohio, April 16
- Zook**, Carol E. Figart, 80, New Oxford, Pa., April 2

## Ordained

- Avent**, Barbara P., W. Plains Dist. (Prince of Peace, Littleton, Colo.), May 24
- Ewing**, Christopher C., N. Ohio Dist. (County Line, Harrod, Ohio), June 7
- Liskey**, Edward, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Myerstown, Pa.), May 17
- McKenzie**, J. Michael, W. Pa. Dist. (Meyersdale, Pa.), April 26
- Sarpiya**, Samuel K., Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Rockford Community, Rockford, Ill.), June 20
- Williams**, Benjamin R., Southeastern Dist. (Fruitdale, Ala.), June 28

## Commissioned

- Heinlein**, Christopher, M. Pa. Dist. (Bannerville, Pa.), Dec. 21
- Link**, James, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Venice Community, Venice, Fla.), May 3
- Lohr**, Cecil M., W. Pa. Dist. (Sipesville, Pa.), Jan. 4
- Sheaffer**, Timothy, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Midway, Lebanon, Pa.), May 31
- Spaulding**, Spencer, S/C Ind. Dist. (Anderson, Ind.), April 26

## Licensed

- Butler**, Travis A., W. Plains Dist. (Prairie View, Scott City, Kan.), July 19
- Crissman**, Jason E., W. Pa. Dist. (Berkey, Windber, Pa.), June 7
- Gruen**, Kevin W., N. Plains Dist. (Iowa River, Marshalltown, Iowa), May 31
- Heishman**, Timothy Solenberger, Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.), June 7

## Placements

- Cooper**, Ryan C., pastor, Emmanuel, Mount Solon, Va., July 1
- Denlinger**, Daniel I., from youth minister to pastor, Eaton, Ohio, July 1
- Dorn**, Rhonda, from youth pastor to pastor of congregational and spiritual ministries, Union Center, Nappanee, Ind., Jan. 1
- Gruen**, Kevin W., pastor, Iowa River, Marshalltown, Iowa, May 31
- Hollandsworth**, Judith, chaplain, Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Shawnee Mission, Kan., July 1
- Johnson**, Roland D., pastor, Cabool, Mo., June 15
- Knoll**, John, pastor, Pleasant Hill, Fairmont, W.Va., May 31
- Link**, James, pastor, Venice Community, Venice, Fla., May 3
- Longwell**, Eric M., pastor, Good Samaritan, Cranberry Township, Pa., June 1
- Otero**, Jose Calleja, district executive/minister, Puerto Rico District, Vega Baja, PR, July 12
- Park**, Calvin, youth and young adult pastor, Frederick, Md., April 1
- Rush**, J. Scott, from pastor, Brookside, Aurora, W.Va., to pastor, Oak Grove, McHenry, Md., June 1
- Scarr**, Jennifer K., pastor, Trotwood, Ohio, June 16
- Sheaffer**, Timothy E., pastor of visitation and Christian education, Midway, Lebanon, Pa., Feb. 8

# Reminders of who we are

**B**ecky Gadzama stood not far from where I was sitting in the Tampa Convention Center, holding up her iPad and turning slowly, taking a video of everyone assembled on the Conference floor—the delegates, those in the stands, the Nigerian Women’s Fellowship



RANDY MILLER  
MESSENGER EDITOR

Choir and others on the stage. She was among the dozens of Nigerian Brethren who attended Annual Conference in Tampa this summer, adding a splash of color wherever they went in their dazzling Nigerian garb. More than once, I spotted others doing exactly what Gadzama had been doing during that session. It was as if they wanted to capture as many moments as they could to savor and cherish in the weeks to come.

Annual Conference is one of the things we do as a denomination that reminds us who we are. It’s our annual check-up, a spiritual shot in the arm and, in a very real sense, it’s also a family reunion (whether your last name is Ziegler or Gamache or Gutierrez). Yes, tensions can run high—as at any family reunion—but deep down there remains a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. Like kids in a junior high school lunchroom, we often cluster with kindred souls at Conference. But beneath our varied garb, if you listen carefully, you can detect a common Brethren heartbeat.

One of the suggestions for tightening our collective Brethren belt some years back was to hold Conference every two years. Because my dad was a Brethren pastor when I was

“I hope you’re keeping some kind of record,” Leonard Cohen wrote in his song “Famous Blue Raincoat.” Keeping some kind of record, some kind of remembrance of things important and meaningful, is exactly what Becky Gadzama and others were doing in Tampa.

The snapshots were verbal as well. Here are a few from Church of the Brethren news director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford:

—Old friends meeting unexpectedly, with hugs and cries of “I didn’t know you were coming to Conference this year!”

—Toddlers playing on the floor at the back of the hall during worship services, and the way surrounding adults watch with indulgent smiles.

—Seeing a fancy hotel lobby fill up with Brethren dressed in NYC and BVS T-shirts, some with small children in tow, some with gray hair, most with coolers full of inexpensive groceries.

—Seeing a delegate go to the microphone with earnest concern that the body do the work of the church diligently and well.

—Hearing the ritual greeting spoken between head table and those at the microphones—the delegate addressing the leader as “brother moderator” or “sister moderator,” and the moderator’s gravely spoken response of “sister” or “brother”—recognizing each other as equals in God’s family.

—Witnessing how uncomfortable, truthful conversations across divides of geography, ethnicity, biblical interpretation, knowledge, and theology may lead to revelation.

— Seeing donated goods pile up in front of the stage as Brethren bring offerings for the Witness to the Host City.

## That’s why we keep scrapbooks and photo albums, which help us remember not just who we were long ago, but also who we are today.

growing up, our summer vacations were built around Conference. Sure, it was always a hot and sticky week, held in places like Louisville, Ky., Ocean Grove, NJ, and Fort Meyers, Fla. (especially for us, since we camped), and sometimes the sessions felt interminable. Nevertheless, when I imagined this Brethren family reunion reduced to every other year, I was disheartened. Even as a kid, I knew that Conference was about much more than tending to the business of the church. It was about rekindling friendships, recharging our spiritual batteries and, of course, ice cream.

—Being surrounded by thousands of people who are praying together, all at the same time.

We need reminders of who we are. That’s why we keep scrapbooks and photo albums, which help us remember not just who we were long ago, but also who we are today.

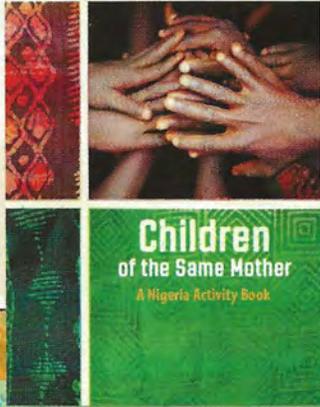
Videos, photographs, verbal snapshots, and even *Annual Conference*, can help us remember who we are and keep us on track. When the going gets tough and we feel overwhelmed and hopeless, they can serve as gentle reminders that we’re not in this alone. **AM**

**COMING IN OCTOBER:** The power of small—rebound and renewal at Washington City

# One body caring for each other

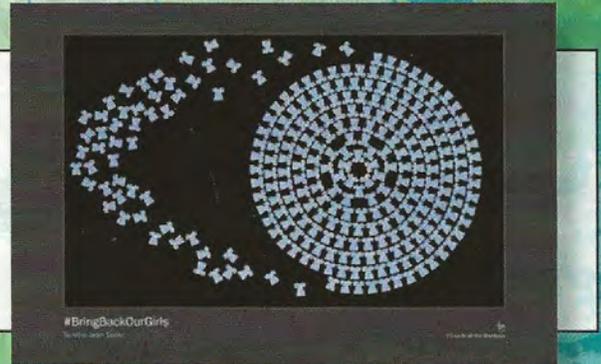
## Children of the Same Mother: A Nigeria Activity Book

This activity book helps Brethren children in the United States learn more about Nigeria as a country and EYN in particular. As young and old learn about the struggles and hopes of brothers and sisters far away, they see how they are truly family in Christ. *For grades 3 through 6. . . . . \$5 per book*



## #BringBackOurGirls Art Print

#BringBackOurGirls was created by Sandra Jean Ceas out of empathy for the Nigerian parents separated from daughters kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014. This art print version is 24" h x 36" w and your purchase helps support the Church of the Brethren Nigeria Crisis Fund. . . . . \$25



## One Body in Christ t-shirt

Certified fair trade, 100% organic cotton. The batik cloth graphic expresses solidarity with Nigerian sisters and brothers and is available in three colors. Your purchase helps support the Nigeria Crisis Fund. Sizes: XS - XXXL. . . . . \$25



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