

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

JANUARY 2006 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

DEALING WITH STRESS

What holds the body of Christ together

**when cracks develop?**

**NOAC is a Church of the Brethren conference offering inspiration, renewal and community for adults 50 and older.**

**Featured presenters will be:**



**Myron Augsburg**, retired pastor and instructor for Eastern Mennonite Seminary

**Sandy Bosserman**, district executive for Missouri/Arkansas District

**Mary Cline Detrick**, pastor of the Daleville (Va.) Church of the Brethren



**Richard Gentzler**, Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries, United Methodist Church

**Ken Haugk**, founder of Stephen Ministries, ordained pastor and clinical psychologist

**Roland Martinson**, professor of Children, Youth and Family Ministries, Luther Seminary



Bible Study - **Dena Pence Frantz**, professor of theology, Bethany Theological Seminary

Musicians **Ryan Harrison** and **Shawn Kirchner**, vocal and piano duo



Comedians **Ted Swartz** and **Lee Eshleman**

*Registration materials will be mailed to past attendees and pastors in February 2006.*

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# Walk in the Light

**National Older Adult Conference**  
**September 4-8, 2006**  
**Lake Junaluska (N.C.) Assembly**

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

Church  
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# MESSENGER

Editor: **Walt Wiltschek** Publisher: **Wendy McFadden** Associate Editor/News: **Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**  
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## ONTHECOVER

Tim Harvey found some applications for the church in chemistry professor Mark Eberhart's book *Why Things Break: Understanding the World by the Way It Comes Apart*. A *Booklist* review of that title said, "In materials science, nothing succeeds like failure, for it prompts discovery of what caused a disaster." How do you avert future disasters? Learn how to forge stronger bonds.

## 8 Stress in the body of Christ

Sure, church life isn't always all it's cracked up to be. Living in community can be a fragile affair. When the cracks develop, though, does the body of Christ hold together or fall apart? The difference is in the way that we "regard others."

## 12 Who are the Brethren of 2006?

What does a cross-section of the denomination look like these days? That's what a new project, the Church Member Profile, aims to find out. It's been some two decades since the last such survey. Have things changed?

## 13 A hero to the left—and the right

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a unique figure in 20th-century religious history. Sentenced to death by the Nazis for his work against that regime, he led a life and left a legacy that appeals to both liberals and conservatives of today.

## 14 What happens when the funds run dry?

Many retirement communities and homes face a growing problem: providing "uncompensated care" after a resident or the resident's family can no longer pay. Wally Landes looks at the dimensions of the issue and some possible responses, including studies already occurring that have others pointing to the Church of the Brethren as a leader in the field.

## 18 2 Kings: Descent into darkness

These are not happy days in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Most kings are turning away from God, and that can only lead to trouble. Despite some bright spots of powerful prophets and righteous rulers, the story inevitably heads toward destruction and exile.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

20 Katrina Special Report

## DEPARTMENTS

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**A**fter Pizza Hut began calling on pizza lovers to “gather ’round the good stuff,” developers of the Brethren-Mennonite *Gather ’Round* Sunday school curriculum saw all sorts of ways to capitalize on the free advertising and work pizzas into training events. (Well, not really. But it was a fun diversion.)



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

It was more of a stretch to try to work in home furnishings and clothing when Target launched its Christmas marketing with a “GATHEROUND” message and round logo. By that time we were just glad we had chosen to trademark the curriculum name. (We don’t lay claim to the words in the areas of pizza or discount retail chains, obviously, but we do in a category that has to do with religious instruction.)

The trademark is jointly owned by Brethren Press and Mennonite Publishing Network, along with the names of two other curricula that we have produced together, *Generation Why* and *Good Ground*. Brethren Press also owns trademarks for “Brethren Press” and “faithQuest,” the two imprints under which we publish.

Owning these trademarks seems sensible. These are names we wear in public, on materials that go beyond the Church of the Brethren.

On a recent shopping trip, however, I was fascinated to discover that not all trademarks make that much sense. There it was on a small plastic box of cheap craft items: Someone has trademarked “God.” At least that’s what the package for the GOD™ craft kit said.

Well, who would have thought! Let’s hope the trademark is limited to children’s crafts. After all, who knows where it would lead if anyone else thought they owned God’s name.

It might mean that only one side in a war could invoke God’s name. Or that only one country could be blessed. Or that only one political party could be right. It might mean that only one interpretation of the Bible could be taught. Or that only one religious leader’s pronouncements could be aired.

I returned a couple of times to that shelf in the store, then picked up the box and studied the label carefully, in order to find out what company was so presumptuous. But God’s secret agent was difficult to ascertain. I’m more curious than concerned, though. I’m confident that God hasn’t become innocuous or trite by being relegated to a commercial product, whether it’s a plastic toy imported from China or a blockbuster publishing phenomenon.

Rather, at the beginning of time God took the risk of going into the public domain. We do not need to worry that any of this diminishes God. All we need to worry about is that it not diminish our understanding of God’s fullness.

*Wendy McFadden*

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### Subscription rates:

\$16.50 individual rate  
\$13.50 church group plan  
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A free study guide for each issue of MESSINGER is available on the site; go to keyword “MESSINGER” and click on the study guide link.

MESSINGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Entered as periodical postage matter Aug. 20, 1918, under Act of Congress of Oct. 17, 1917. Filing date, Nov. 1, 1984. Member of the Associated Church Press. Subscriber to Religion News Service & Ecumenical Press Service. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. MESSINGER is published 11 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren General Board. Periodical postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and at additional mailing office, January 2006. Copyright 2006, Church of the Brethren General Board. ISSN 0026-0355.

Postmaster: Send address changes to MESSINGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



Printed on recycled paper  
(20% post consumer)

## AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

**Atlantic Northeast:** Brisa Saks, a member of East Fairview Church of the Brethren, began this fall as the new program coordinator for Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa.

**Atlantic Southeast:** Sebring (Fla.) pastor Cecil Hess has written a hymn celebrating the diversity in the district. Titled "Open the Door," it is set to the tune of "Faith of Our Fathers."

**Idaho:** A fundraiser banquet for Camp Wilbur Stover was scheduled for Jan. 28 at Nampa Church of the Brethren.

**Illinois/Wisconsin:** District conference was held in Springfield, Ill., Nov. 4-6, with 207 attending. A silent auction raised more than \$1,400 for district ministries.

**Michigan:** District executive Marie Willoughby hosted dinner/discussion/fellowship events for pastors and spouses this fall in the northeast and southwest parts of the district.

**Mid-Atlantic:** The Faithful Servants church plant in Frederick, Md., was officially accepted and delegates seated at this year's district conference in October. Delegates voted against a proposal to move the conference date to the spring.

**Middle Pennsylvania:** Amy Crouse of the Beech Run congregation created a PowerPoint of district ministries for district conference this fall; it is now available for congregational use.

**Missouri/Arkansas:** The district board made up to \$3,000 available as grants for congregations working on projects to respond to hurricanes Katrina and Rita and for a district response team.

**Northern Indiana:** The Goshen City and West Goshen congregations joined forces to sponsor a beef noodle dinner that raised \$3,470 for the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund.

**Northern Ohio:** District executive John Ballinger led a trio of fall area clergy meetings in October on the theme "Hey, I Have Some Good News: A Look at Evangelism."

**Northern Plains:** Beaver (Iowa) Church of the Brethren found a unique way to connect with its community this fall: hosting a meal event for all the mayors of the towns in its county.



**Getting healthy:** Carol Yeazell, a member of the General Board's Area 3 (Southeast) Congregational Life Team (CLT), hosted a first for the Church of the Brethren in October: a facilitator training for the Healthy Congregations program, held in Arden, N.C. Those trained are now certified to present and lead the series of six sessions working at creating healthy congregational life. Jim Kinsey, CLT staff for areas 2 and 4 and a certified trainer of facilitators, led the three-day event. Those trained were: kneeling, Del Keeney, executive director for General Board Congregational Life Ministries; back row from left, Phil Graeber, Southeastern District; Kinsey; Steve Abe and John Moyers, West Marva; Ron Wine, Southeastern; and Mark Chidley, Atlantic Southeast.

**Oregon/Washington:** The Portland (Ore.) Peace congregation has begun special first-Sunday worship and potluck events to connect with people in the area who have Brethren connections and others who might be interested.

**Pacific Southwest:** Doris Hopwood Dunham of the Bakersfield (Calif.) congregation has been hired as director for the district's Center of Brethren Studies to coordinate leadership training.

**Shenandoah:** Brethren Woods on Dec. 18 held its annual "friends of camp and their families" Christmas party, including a meal and the exchange of "white elephant gifts."

**South/Central Indiana:** Northview Church of the Brethren (Indianapolis) hosted an alternative Christmas fair on Nov. 12 that featured a message by former Indiana first lady Judy O'Bannon.

**Southeastern:** The district witness commission has made disaster response this year's focus. Congregations are being urged to make monetary and relief kit donations and send workers to projects.

**Southern Ohio:** The "Auction in the Spring" kickoff dinner for the annual disaster response benefit effort is scheduled for Jan. 20 at Oakland Church of the Brethren. The main auction will be Apr. 29.

**Southern Pennsylvania:** Michele Smith, a member of Hanover (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, has been called as the new director for Camp Eder (Fairfield, Pa.).

**Southern Plains:** The Clovis (N.M.) congregation raised \$11,000 for Hurricane Katrina relief by joining in a city-wide garage sale.

**Virginia:** District conference was held Nov. 11-12 in Beckley, W.Va. Delegates approved a constitutional amendment reducing the number of area divisions within the district from 10 to nine, with a corresponding realignment of congregations. Owen G. Stultz was named district executive emeritus.

**West Marva:** Thelma Cox has been called to serve as interim youth advisor for the district.

**Western Pennsylvania:** Delegates at district conference on Oct. 22 recognized Journey's Way Ministries of Glencoe, Pa., as a new congregation.

**Western Plains:** The district reported a significant gap between income and expenses heading toward the end of the year, with giving down slightly and expenditures increasing.

*Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.*

## Wilmington throws a party for its oldest members

Wilmington (Del.) Church of the Brethren this past summer started a new program of recognizing the birthdays of members 90 years of age or older. On July 24, the church celebrated the birthdays of two ladies—Mabel West (age 100), born July 24, 1905, and Freda Torchio (age 92), born July 9, 1913. On Aug. 28, it celebrated Betty Moyer's 90th birthday; she was born Aug. 19, 1915.

Each was interviewed in her home, and their stories were presented to the congregation during Sunday morning worship. The deacons prepared a scrapbook of birthday wishes for each one, and members signed a very large birthday card for Mabel because of her poor eyesight. Each also was given a CD of the service, their favorite flowers were placed in the worship center, and a reception was held after worship with a birthday cake.

"I don't know who enjoyed these two special Sundays the most—the ladies whom we honored, the congregation, or the pastor," interim pastor Allen T. Hansell said. "In any case, there was much laughter and many tears of joy."

*Youth and other participants spend an afternoon learning about military recruiting techniques at a Chicago First Church of the Brethren workshop this fall.*



Duane Edige

## Sgt. Abe helps Chicago youth with recruitment issues

With its young folks on the receiving end of a slick and aggressive nationwide military recruiting drive, members of Chicago First Church of the Brethren brought in their own recruiter: Sergeant Abe.

A creation of Quaker House in Fayetteville, N.C. (neighbor to Fort Bragg, one of the world's largest military complexes), "Sgt. Abe, the Honest Recruiter" appears overlaid on a copy of a conscription agreement. He points out key details recruiters often fail to mention—such as non-negotiable extensions of deployment—and explains what they can mean in a soldier's real life.

Sgt. Abe was just one of many tools employed during an afternoon

workshop held at the church on the International Day of Peace, Sept. 21.

Participants opened the session by sharing their connections with the military, heard personal experiences of peacemaking in war zones, saw a video featuring interviews of enlistees, were given forms to fill out to help establish a claim of conscientious objection in case a military draft is reinstated, and learned it is possible, even easy, to back out of a commitment to the Delayed Entry Program.

The 22 participants included seven youth (three regulars at Chicago First and four of their friends), several adult members, a chaplain from neighboring Bethany Hospital, a South African visitor, a Mennonite pastor, a Voluntary Service worker with youth organizing for peace, and other local community organizers. Doug Hostetter, peace minister of Evanston Mennonite Church, and experienced draft counselor Rich Rutschman led the session.

The church served pizza and soft drinks after the 90-minute workshop, and partic-

Chrystal Bostian



**Residents of Pinecrest Community in Mount Morris, Ill.,** added scenery to their solarium garden this fall with the hard work of some 75 fourth-grade students from the local Etnyre School. The children spent an afternoon building scarecrows for the garden, with four pumpkin-head creatures eventually standing ready to guard the fall foliage from foragers. One group named their scarecrow "Betty" after Manor resident Betty Sier, who was "pleased as punch" to have such a namesake. Sier, pictured at left with two of the students, joined the group around the stuffing table to help pack Betty with paper and straw. This is the second year students were able to do the project.

ipants were invited to stay for an evening Bible study on the related theme of "The Healing Power of Nonviolence/Love" led by pastor Orlando Redekopp.—**Duane Ediger**

"Sgt. Abe, the Honest Recruiter" is downloadable as a pdf file from [www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org).

## Palmyra uses love feast service to reflect on hunger concerns

When Brethren at Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren gathered for love feast in October, they did things a little differently.

At the recommendation of the pastoral staff, the deacons voted to alter the order of service at the point of the agape meal. Instead of eating the traditional symbolic meal of beef rice soup and bread, the congregation fasted during the World Communion Sunday's observance of the Last Supper.

Where the brothers and sisters would normally have supped together, the pastors instead shared scriptural meditations on prayer and fasting, focusing on Luke's account of the Last Supper—where it is not clear whether Jesus ate with the 12 or himself fasted in preparation for his death. The hymn "Brothers and Sisters of Mine Are the Hungry" was sung with its pledge, "And I shall not feast till the hungry are fed," and the question, "What shall I offer them, bread or a stone?"

Additionally, members were asked to bring non-perishable food items to help stock the congregation's Caring Cupboard, a food bank that twice weekly extends assistance to dozens of area families.

This one-time alteration in the liturgy was prompted by the pastors' concern over national and international crises that leave people hungry and generally deprived. While some deacons were concerned about tampering with form/ritual, the majority of the deacon body agreed that addressing critical human needs was consistent with Jesus' concern for the poor and should take precedence.

In a sermon preached some months prior, pastor Dennis Lohr had observed that the Bible says in various places that God will not accept our worship for lack of justice and righteousness, but nowhere does it suggest that God will reject our works of justice and righteousness for lack of worship. Apparently some folks were listening.—**Wally Landes**

## LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA)/SANRU staff member **Ngoma Miezi Kintaudi** was one of nine "heroes of global health" honored at the TIME Global Health Summit in New York Nov. 1-3 as leaders of global health initiatives that can serve as a model elsewhere. Kintaudi, a University of La Verne graduate, is director of the Department of Medical Services of the Protestant Church of Congo and works in partnership with IMA to direct the SANRU rural health program in his home country.

• **Clarence "Cooney" Wineland** marked his 100th birthday on Nov. 5 with a grand party at Martinsburg (Pa.) Memorial Church of the Brethren. Wineland lives at nearby The Village at Morrisons Cove. The *Morrisons Cove Herald* did a full-page feature on Wineland's centennial.

• **Frank Mosholder** celebrated his 101st birthday Nov. 27 with an open house. He is a member of Roxbury Church of the Brethren, Johnstown, Pa.

• **Dorothy Burris**, a member of Virden (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, celebrated her 102nd birthday on Nov. 7.

• **George Etzweiler**, a member of University Baptist Brethren Church in State College, Pa., ran the all-uphill Mount Washington Road Race in New Hampshire this past summer at age 85. An avid runner, he is believed to be the oldest person ever to finish the 7.6-mile race. He beat the record for his age group by about 30 minutes, finishing in 2 hours, 33 minutes.

• **Ricardo Esquivia**, a Mennonite peacemaker in Colombia who visited the Church of the Brethren General Offices several years ago, received the 2005 Peacemakers in Action Award by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding in New York this fall. Esquivia is a leader in the Colombian Mennonite Church and the founder of Justapaz, a Colombian Mennonite organization that works for peace and justice.

• A story by Elizabethtown (Pa.) College faculty emeritus **J. Kenneth Kreider**, titled "Gifts from Grandma," was included in the book *Chicken Soup for the Grandma's Soul*, published this past August. The story involved a tour group attending the 250th anniversary celebration of the Church of the Brethren in Germany. Several newspapers and a local TV station did features on the story's acceptance.

• An October article in the *Shenandoah Journal* of Virginia recognized **Olive Roop**, 92, for the role she and her late husband, Roger, played in the beginnings of what is now Heifer International. The Roops' farm near Union Bridge, Md., was used as an early collection point for relief heifers. Roop now lives at the Bridgewater (Va.) Retirement Community.

• *The Arizona Republic* profiled **Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren** in its Nov. 12 edition for its "Earth-friendly" approach. Papago Buttes, located in Scottsdale, was the first building that was neither a home nor a government agency to be completed under the area's new Sustainable Building Program. The church included numerous environmentally sensitive features in its new building.

## REMEMBERED

• **Patricia Kennedy Helman**, "first lady" and hostess of Manchester College from 1956 to 1986, died Oct. 28 in North Manchester, Ind. She was 80. Memorial services were held Nov. 4 at Manchester Church of the Brethren.

An ordained minister originally from Marshalltown, Iowa, she was a graduate of McPherson (Kan.) College and Bethany Biblical Seminary. She authored four books and numerous poems and was co-founder and president of The Joyful Scribes Corp., a religious greeting card company purchased by Abbey Press in 1993. She also wrote "The Pilgrim's Pen" for *MESSANGER* in the 1980s. Her husband, A. Blair Helman, was one of the college's longest-tenured presidents. A residence hall at the school is named in the couple's honor.

# The living Word of God

**I** remember well the conversation at the Thanksgiving table during my first year of seminary.

I came home to spend the holiday with my family, and over dinner I shared some things I was learning. I launched into a recent discovery from my Introduction to Old Testament class that the story of Adam and Eve was actually written during the time the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon.



CHRISTY WALTERSDORFF

Ignoring the horrified looks on the faces of my sisters, I told them it was written to give hope to the exiles, to remind them that God was in charge and that the God who created the world was still with them, still working, still bringing new things out of chaos.

One sister asked, "You mean Adam and Eve were not real people?" while another put her hands over her ears and said, "I don't want to hear this!" I kindly explained that

this story is more faith statement than history lesson. And then I went on to tell them there are actually two creation stories in Genesis, and I was just getting started. Before we even got to dessert, I had blithely trampled on what my sisters believed to be sacred. They were glad when I went back to seminary after the holiday was over.

The Bible is important to us. For some, it has been with us as long as we can remember; for others, it has been discovered and treasured along the journey of our lives. But I would guess that most of us have a pretty strong sense of what the Bible means to us, and if anyone tries to tamper with that meaning we are offended, angry, threatened,

words of scripture so seriously that they would "put them in their heart and soul, bind them on their hand and fix them to their forehead." The Word of God was to be as natural to their lives as breathing. The words were supposed to make an impact on their lives.

For Jesus, the holy scriptures were of utmost importance. He was raised and educated in the Jewish law. When he returned to his hometown at the start of his ministry, the first thing he did was go to the synagogue, as he always did, but this time he picked up the scroll of the book of Isaiah and read with new authority: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." The old familiar words were suddenly infused with new meaning.

We read the Bible in different ways because even though God's truth is universal, God speaks differently to each of us. We have different life experiences, different experiences of Jesus Christ, different histories, different educational backgrounds, different faith stories. That is the beauty of the scriptures. What we bring to our reading of scripture is almost as important as what the ancient writers brought when they first put the words on paper. That is why we call it the "living Word of God."

From the very beginning, the Bible has been central to Brethren faith and practice. The first Brethren left the state church in Germany because as they studied the Bible together they found new meaning and felt called to form a community of faith more closely resembling what they found in the scriptures. As the years have gone by, the importance of scripture to the Church of the Brethren has not diminished. What has changed, however, and what causes me increasing concern, is our lack of tolerance for those whose interpretation of scripture differs from ours. This growing animosity is making itself known in painful and divisive ways in our denomination.

The *Brethren Encyclopedia* lists five characteristics of the way Brethren interpret scripture. Those include the insistence that we read it with an attitude of openness to new truth, a sincere

desire to emulate the early Christians, and the strong feeling that studying the Bible is not an individual endeavor but something to be undertaken within the community of believers.

So, do our differing ways of reading and interpreting the Bible harm the church? Actually, I think it enhances the church. Those who choose to live as disciples of Jesus Christ commit themselves not only to Christ but also to a community of faith. Through that community we learn what it means to be a Christian. We learn from God and from one another's experiences of God.

The words written by men and women thousands of years ago can still transform us because the Holy Spirit breathes life into them and into us. Once we think we have it all figured out, where do we go from there?

One thing we can agree on is that the Bible is the foundation upon which we stand as Christians. Another thing we can agree on is that we do not agree when it comes to the interpretation of scripture. Because of that we must continue reading, praying, learning, growing, changing—together—until we become the people God is calling us to be. ❧

Christy Waltersdorff is pastor of York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill.

## So, do our differing ways of reading and interpreting the Bible harm the church? Actually, I think it enhances the church.

upset. The Bible is the foundation of Christian belief, yet people read it and interpret it in such different ways. How can this be? How can two people read the same text and come away with such opposing views? That is the blessing and the challenge of our life together as Christians.

The Bible is the story of a relationship between God and God's people. It is a story that spans centuries and cultures, a story that includes the good, the bad, and the ugly. It is a book about us. The Bible is a book full of stories about God, the God who chooses to be in relationship with us.

Ironically, this collection of 66 books—which includes history, narrative, poetry, laments, hymns, parables, and letters—is at the center of some of the most divisive conflict in the Christian church. Some Christians read the Bible as the literal word of God, straight from the mouth of God to the pens of human writers. Others believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God—written by human beings in relationship with God and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they wrote. Still others believe the Bible is a nice collection of writings but without much impact on their lives.

In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (11:18-21) we find God instructing the Hebrew people to take the



QUOTE WORTHY

“There is one place where unity can be found today, that can provide what is necessary to bring renewal. That place is at the foot of the cross, at a place called forgiveness.”

—Ashland (Ohio) Dickey Church of the Brethren pastor Tom Zuercher, writing in the *BRF Witness* newsletter about “The Dilemma of Finding Unity Among the Brethren”

“The Church of the Brethren is a fun, musical, exciting, loving church that will always be great. You should come sometime!”

—Seventh-grader Amanda McLearn-Montz of Freeport, Ill., writing last spring in a research paper for her middle-school class. She is a member of Freeport Church of the Brethren and associate member of Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

“It looks like philanthropy is being reinterpreted as giving to things that benefit you, not to things outside yourself, things that demonstrate true altruism.”

—Sylvia Ronsvalle, co-founder of religious research group Empty Tomb, commenting on church giving trends

“It’s easy for us to go ‘over there.’ Why can’t we have the same zeal for witnessing to our neighbor or in an area where there is no Church of the Brethren? We need to be the church of the Great Commission in the US.”

—General secretary Stan Noffsinger, speaking to the General Board about the need for domestic mission/evangelism as well as international mission

“Sometimes being the ‘only one’ is very difficult. . . . But through the grace of God who protects us we can get through anything.”

—Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren member Don Mitchell, speaking at a cross-cultural roundtable session about being a minority

“The fruit of his teaching and writing . . . showed that scholarship could be a ministry within and beyond the church.”

—part of a memorial tribute to Brethren historian Donald F. Durnbaugh in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, written by Bethany Theological Seminary professor Jeff Bach

“Answering or not answering a call is not an option. The question is whose call will you respond to.”

—Roger Schrock, pastor of Cabool (Mo.) Church of the Brethren and a former Brethren mission worker, speaking to youth about God’s calling

CULTUREVIEW

• A landmark **\$10 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc.** to Vanderbilt University Divinity School marks the beginning of a move by the school and the Graduate Department of Religion to address a nationwide shortage of practical theology professors and the need for young scholars in theological education to address their fields to the practice of ministry. Vanderbilt will use the funding to create the Program in Theology and Practice, which will produce more and better teachers for theological schools.

• Information and updates on the **World Council of Churches’ (WCC) 9th Assembly**, to be held Feb. 14-23 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, can be found at [www.wcc-assembly.info](http://www.wcc-assembly.info). The event will bring together thousands of people, including a delegation of Brethren, for ecumenical conversations, prayer, celebration, and deliberation. The five-language website offers an overview of the event and will feature online news coverage and webcasts once the Assembly begins.

• The new **Mennonite Your Way directory** (for 2006-2008)

is expected to be available early this year—which marks the 30th anniversary of the directory’s beginning. The guide lists host families who offer hospitality and space in their homes for a suggested donation and travelers who seek fellowship as they stay overnight along their way. More information is at [www.mennoniteyourway.com](http://www.mennoniteyourway.com).

• Robert Greenwald’s film, **“Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices”** was released Dec. 13 to kick off “Higher Expectations Week.” The film raises justice issues and “the negative effect Wal-Mart has on rural and urban America,” according to a release.

• **Ten Thousand Villages**, the oldest and largest fair trade home décor and gift retailer in the United States, received the first ever People’s Choice Award for “Green Business of the Year” from Co-op America at the San Francisco Green Festival Nov. 4. The award recognized Ten Thousand Villages’ commitment to social and environmental responsibility.



JUST FOR FUN: SCRAMBLE

**INTO AFRICA** The Church of the Brethren General Board at its October meeting approved initial steps toward a major new mission program in Sudan. January also marks the annual General Board-sponsored Nigeria workcamp. Unscramble below the names of these other African countries (answers below):

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| AINTAZAN   | AALONG    |
| AWILMA     | RAGEAIL   |
| EYANK      | MORENOCA  |
| PYGET      | DIALSWANZ |
| LIMA       | COMCOOR   |
| BRAILIE    | BEAMWIBZ  |
| QUIBOMAZEM | JIIDUBT   |

ANSWERS: Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Egypt, Mali, Liberia, Mozambique, Angola, Algeria, Cameroon, Swaziland, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Djibouti.



by Tim Harvey

# STRESS

in the body of Christ

How do we 'regard others'  
through the joys and challenges  
of life together?

It is possible to strengthen a material by adding elements that will reach across a stress. Materials that are known to be weaker can be strengthened in the fabrication process. It's a fascinating concept, but how do we capture this as an aspect of discipleship? I would propose that we all would benefit from growing in the spiritual discipline of regarding others.

**W**hen was the last time your deepest hopes and dreams were satisfied in your work, your daily schedule, or by a report you heard on the nightly news? Each year our Christmas celebrations remind us of the possibilities of salvation, peace, and hope that the birth of Jesus represents. Each year our New Year's resolutions provide yet another opportunity to consider transformation.

But I am becoming increasingly aware of the many ways the brokenness of the world turns our aspirations into frustrations. Consider with me . . .

. . . the way corporate America treats employees. I know too many honest, hard-working people who have given their best efforts to their company, only to be laid off in the all-consuming demand for a cheaper T-shirt. In the logic of the world, workers aren't people, they are assets to be hired or fired to meet the demands of the "bottom line."

. . . the way politicians in election campaigns focus solely on what they disagree with in their opponent's position. Attack ads distort claims of opponent's records, exaggerate, and misrepresent the truth. In the logic of the world, political opponents aren't people, they are positions to be defeated.

Issues like these (and many others) continually trample our Spirit-given aspirations for the life promised in Christ. What

I find especially painful, however, is how often this same type of thinking is present in the church. Again, consider with me . . .

. . . the pain of watching family members take sides in a family conflict.

. . . the anger found when Christians take sides over an issue facing the congregation or the denomination, such as the performance of the pastor, or the various sub-issues in the whole conservative vs. liberal debate.

The truth of the matter is that I often have strong personal opinions on current issues in the church, both on the local and denominational level. I'd like to think, though, that I'm equally concerned about how I treat those with whom I disagree. Admittedly, some days are better than others on this point.

Being a member of a local, living body of Christ-followers ought to make a concrete difference in our lives, even in times of disagreement. The fact that we believe in this radical concept called spiritual transformation—"to be made new in the attitude of your minds," as Paul called it in Ephesians 4:23—suggests to us that as we seek authentic life in Christ, it is possible to find unity on the issues that face us in our day. But what does this transformation look like?

In my recent reading, I discovered an illustration from the world of materials science—with a surprising application to a well-known historical event—that might help us along our way.

#### A lesson from the past

On April 10, 1912, the *RMS Titanic* set sail from Southampton, England, with 2,200 passengers on board. Four days later, the ship collided with an iceberg in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic and quickly sank, killing nearly 1,500 passengers. It remains one of the worst maritime accidents in the history of the world.

For many years some basic assumptions were made about what happened after the *Titanic* hit the iceberg. The leading assumption was that the iceberg tore a gash along 300 feet of the hull, and that this, combined with design flaws and human error, led to the tragedy.

Recent studies have added to our understanding. First, it is now known that there was not one long tear in the *Titanic's* hull. Instead, many smaller cracks formed along the starboard hull upon impact with the iceberg. Second, though the steel in the hull was of the finest quality available in that day, it was significantly weaker than modern steel because of a high concentration of the element sulfur, which is known to weaken steel. Such steel would be rejected as defective by modern shipbuilding standards.

Mark Eberhart, a chemistry professor at the Colorado School of Mines, discusses the implications of the sulfur and the cracks in the hull in his book *Why Things Break: Understanding the World by the Way It Comes Apart*. His theory (in brief) is that while the iceberg directly punctured some holes in the ship's hull, many of the



cracks in the hull were caused by the weakened steel tearing under the stress of the collision. The weakened, brittle steel was not strong enough to prevent cracks from running, somewhat like women's hose will run once they have a hole.

A simple illustration of my own shows how this may have happened. Imagine you are standing in a straight line, shoulder-to-shoulder with a group of your friends. About 2 feet in front of you is another straight line of people also standing shoulder-to-shoulder. Now imagine that a person wants to run between the two lines of people. If all of the people in the lines hold hands with the people *next* to them, someone can run between the two lines quite easily. But if everyone holds hands with the people *across* from them, then it will be much harder to get through the line.

This, in essence, is what happened to the

*Titanic*. When cracks started to form in the hull, the sulfur molecules in the steel "held on" to other sulfur molecules on their side of the crack, thus allowing the cracks to run. The sulfur in the steel, by its very nature, was like the line of people who hold hands with those next to them: when it was faced with the stress caused by the collision, the cracks were able to run.

The solution to such problems is to introduce elements into steel (or other materials) that "hold on" to molecules across a stress, much like the line of people in the above illustration holding hands with the people across from them. Such behavior, by people or by chemical materials, strengthens the material they are in. Had the *Titanic* had more of this kind of material in its steel—making the steel stronger—the outcome of that night might have been different.

## Regarding others

So what is the connection to the presence of those challenging, even potentially divisive issues in the church? Let me be quick to say that the connection is *not with the sinking ship*. From my position as a pastor and as a member of the General Board, I am as convinced as ever that the Church of the Brethren is the place to be! Our heritage as a body of believers who believe in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed will serve us well in the coming years.

The connection has to do with those times we are faced with divisive issues. We all know that conflicts—like icebergs—are real. Their presence demands our response. Some of the conflicts we face in life are rather like the iceberg the *Titanic* hit: We see them coming a mile away and should be able to prepare for them. Others, however, are

dropped into our lap at a moment's notice, and we are wrapped up in them before we have had any opportunity to prepare. When faced with a controversial matter, what kind of people are we?

**The sulfur in *Titanic's* steel, by its very nature, was like the line of people who hold hands with those next to them: when it was faced with the stress caused by the collision, the cracks were able to run.**

## RESOURCES

Among numerous Annual Conference statements on dealing with differences on issues is the 2004 paper on "Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions" ([www.brethren.org/ac/ac\\_statements/2004DisagreeAC.html](http://www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/2004DisagreeAC.html)). The 1979 statement on "Biblical Inspiration and Authority" ([www.brethren.org/ac/ac\\_statements/79BiblicalInspiration%26Authority.htm](http://www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/79BiblicalInspiration%26Authority.htm)) is often cited as a model for responding to issues on which the church is not of one mind.

On Earth Peace's Ministry of Reconciliation offers a variety of resources, including workshops on Matthew 18 and other topics and a network of trained mediators for situations needing outside help for conflict resolution. More information is at [www.brethren.org/oepa](http://www.brethren.org/oepa).

I have observed that our creativity in dealing with disagreements often falls into one of two general approaches. The first is to cast out those with whom we disagree, even before we've sat down to learn their names. The impersonal nature of e-mail, list-servers, and our society in general makes it very easy to engage in debate without knowing the individual. The problem with this position is that it allows us to treat people according to their positions, to put them in boxes based on what they believe. It's much easier to deal with (or not deal with) positions than it is people.

**If we are truly being transformed in Christ, then we should expect to find an increasing willingness and patience to reach across issues of stress and hold on to people with whom we disagree. This is an aspect of Christian love.**

This approach allows us to relate to issues but not our brothers and sisters.

A second possibility is to declare every position equally acceptable, saying what is right for some need not be right for others. The pluralistic character of our postmodern culture makes this position as viable as the former. But there are perils here, too. Primarily, we can't all be right. If the church is a place where many options (even contradictory ones) are equally valid, then the church isn't all that different from the world. This approach allows us to relate to our brothers and sisters, but not deal with issues.

The field of materials science (which studies aspects of God's creation, to be sure!) points us to a third possibility. It is possible to strengthen a material by adding elements that will reach across a stress. Materials that are known to be weaker can be strengthened in the fabrication process. It's a fascinating concept, but how do we capture this as an aspect of discipleship? I would propose that we all would benefit from growing in the spiritual discipline of *regarding others*.

Philippians 2:1-11 is one of the most significant New Testament passages concerning the work of Christ. In between instructions on unity (vs. 1-2) and the famous hymn of Christ's servant nature (vs. 5-11), Paul sneaks in a seemingly harmless instruction that is likely a challenge for us all: "in humility regard others as better than yourselves" (v. 3).

The verb translated by the NRSV as "regard" is one of a group of words in scripture that have the meaning "regard, consider, think, or discern." The idea is that a person will carefully examine someone or something and then come to a conclusion. To regard something suggests that we will take an open-minded

and honest look at all aspects of a position before coming to a conclusion. This in itself is an extremely helpful attitude in the midst of a divisive issue. But Philippians 2:3 has even more.

First, the discipline of regarding others requires an attitude of *humility*. No one person is right all the time. Often in a disagreement, both parties are partly right and partly wrong—truth is found in the middle. If we are willing to take a close look at something, we may find that we're not as right as we thought, and humbly admit a need to change our mind. Tom Zuercher says as much in a recent issue of the *BRF Witness* newsletter: "If two people are in conflict with one another over differing beliefs, in order for them to agree with one another, one or both of them must alter their beliefs."

Second, the discipline of regarding others requires a consideration of *others*. Reconciliation is possible only when we see others as people, and not merely as members of a certain group, however that group might be defined (race, class, liberal, conservative, etc.). If we are willing to consider someone as a brother or sister, then there is the possibility for conversation and mutual pursuit of God's truth, something that is an essential part of our Brethren heritage.

In his book *Biblical Pacifism*, Dale Brown points to such a possibility in interpersonal conflicts and other challenging situations when he says, "Shalom . . . is an expression of God's power bringing healing and wholeness to every part of our hurt and alienated lives: our inequitable and unjust socio-economic situations, our discordant community affairs, [and] *our broken interpersonal relationships*" (p. 138, emphasis added). When we are willing to regard others as



Messenger file

strongly as we often regard our own opinions, we may find ourselves in a better position to discern God's truth.

These two qualities clearly are not everything that could or should be said on this matter, but perhaps they are a start. If we are truly being transformed in Christ, then we should expect to find an increasing willingness and patience to reach across issues of stress and hold on to people with whom we disagree. This is an aspect of Christian love.

It does not mean we will always change our mind. It does not mean we have to accept something we believe to be wrong. Regarding others begins when we are humbly willing to take our relationship as brothers and sisters seriously, as we pursue God's will together. Such an approach will enable us to experience all aspects of life in Christ more richly.

As we worship, fellowship, learn, pray, and even help one another grow by lovingly naming sin for what it is, we will find—amid all of the challenges of life—that the spiritual discipline of regarding others will help make our churches stronger. **AM**

Tim Harvey is pastor of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., and a member of the Church of the Brethren General Board.

# Who are the Brethren of 2006?

*New project seeks to paint a picture of the denomination*

**T**wenty years ago Brethren were fascinated by the findings of a young graduate student who did a scientific survey of the church.

In a year-long MESSENGER series, "Who are the Brethren of 1986?," Carl Bowman provocatively examined Brethren beliefs and practices, including commitment to ordinances like love feast, attitudes toward homosexuality, the role of women, biblical authority, political views, adherence to the traditional peace perspective, and much more. The findings eventually were published by Brethren Press in *A Profile of the Church of the Brethren*. They also helped shape Bowman's landmark book *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a Peculiar People* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

You can tell just by looking at him that Carl Bowman, now a professor of sociology at Bridgewater (Va.) College, has changed over the past two decades. His hair's a little thinner and his middle not quite as thin. The more difficult question to discern is how the Church of the Brethren has aged during the same period.

Bowman aims to find out—with the help of some 3,000 Brethren who will receive a comprehensive survey form in the mail in February.

Bowman is Brethren project director for Church Member Profile 2006 (CMP 2006), a national survey of Anabaptist groups being conducted by Elizabethtown (Pa.) College's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. The Young Center's Donald Kraybill, a member of Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren and an Elizabethtown College professor, is senior project director. Funding for CMP 2006 is being provided by the three denominations included in the profile (Brethren, Mennonites, and Brethren in Christ) and other church-related organizations.

The Brethren version of the CMP 2006 survey will include questions about the respondent's family background and personal faith story, devotional practices and religious beliefs, social issues and political views, lifestyle issues and leisure activities.

Questions are as simple as "How often do you typically attend church?" and as complex as "Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of withholding food and water from a terminally ill person in great pain and who requests to die?"

Other questions address knowledge of the Bible; frequency of Bible reading and prayer;

by Donald R. Fitzkee

worship preferences; beliefs about God, Jesus, scriptural authority, the resurrection, heaven, and hell; attitudes toward pledging allegiance to the flag and military service; and views of abortion, death penalty, environmental issues, relationships with other religious groups, and much more.

Some of the questions are the same as in Bowman's 1985 survey, which will allow for meaningful comparisons across time. Other questions of the survey are new, like ones pertaining to Internet usage, end-of-life ethics, or experiences with abuse. "In doing this as part of a team," Bowman says, "we all are bringing items from other surveys that are interesting."

The sample of 3,000 people who will receive the surveys was selected scientifically so that every member of the church has an equal chance of being chosen. It will include representatives from congregations of various sizes and every district of the denomination. Of course, the greater the percentage of those completing the survey, the more reliable and useful the data will be.

The findings will be released in some form in 2007, on the eve of the Church of the Brethren's tricentennial in 2008. Bowman believes the timing is perfect for a "benchmark study" such as this one. "After 300 years," Bowman says, "I'm really interested to what extent the traditional Brethren emphases are still held among the rank and file."

But the study, he says, will be of interest beyond academic circles. "It's a study of the general membership, not the most active," he says. "So you get a broad picture of the membership. I think that's incredibly useful."

While the issue of how the results will be published is still under discussion, the findings from the survey will be used by denominational leaders, pastors, and others to shape church programs, resources, and congregational life.

Who knows? Perhaps MESSENGER will run a new series of articles—this time by a middle-aged sociologist—teasing us with information about this perplexing, and sometimes downright vexing, group called the Church of the Brethren.

"Who are the Brethren of 2006?" Soon we'll know. ■

Donald R. Fitzkee is development and interpretation coordinator for COBYS Family Services and a free minister in Chiques Church of the Brethren, Manheim, Pa.

**"It's a study of the general membership, not the most active, so you get a broad picture. I think that's incredibly useful."**

—Carl Bowman



Messenger file

# A hero to the left —and the right

Chris Herlinger



## Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 'seamless' life continues to inspire

**W**hen Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 39, quietly strode toward Nazi prison gallows as the Second World War neared its end, he could hardly have known that more than 60 years later, his life, memory, and legacy would remain the subject of keen debate and fascination—not to mention outright reverence.

Indeed, since his April 9, 1945, execution for his role in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, Bonhoeffer has become something of a universal, and utterly rare, phenomenon.

He is one of the few theologians to have his life dramatized in films and plays. He has been the subject of documentaries and numerous biographies. But perhaps most importantly, Bonhoeffer is one of the few 20th-century Christian figures whose writings continue to be read, quoted, and appropriated by liberal and conservative Christians alike.

In that sense, Bonhoeffer has been likened to a kind of theological "Rorschach test," as the liberal theologian Harvey Cox once described him.

"Dietrich Bonhoeffer's equivocal theological residue elicits wildly different interpretations," Cox said. "In the current enthusiasm to decode the anagram and declare 'what Bonhoeffer really meant,' we learn at least as much about the sleuths as about the mystery itself."

And what a varied group of "sleuths" they have been: Bonhoeffer's memory and example were evoked by black liberation theologians in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, just as they are now by some conservative evangelical Christians

committed to ending abortion. James Dobson is among the conservatives who have cited Bonhoeffer as an example of a Christian who took a stand for moral truth.

Liberals see the German theologian as a prophet and admire his commitment to ecumenism and social action; conservatives see Bonhoeffer as an apostle who moved in the world with a keen love and reverence for Jesus Christ.

Both liberals and conservatives view Bonhoeffer as a martyr. But according to scholar Stephen Haynes, who wrote *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint*, "getting at" him means having to examine the various roles Bonhoeffer has assumed in the religious imagination: "seer, prophet, apostle, hero, bridge, martyr, and even saint."

"Each portrait has a continuity to it and is compelling. And each one can survive on its own," said Haynes, who teaches religion at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn.

In writing about the ways Bonhoeffer's life, memory, and work have been used by widely different interpreters and religious communities, Haynes is sometimes unsparingly honest in acknowledging that it isn't necessarily theology that draws people to Bonhoeffer; it is the sheer drama of a life that, as Haynes notes, has an almost cinematic quality to it.

Clues to Bonhoeffer's thinking are in the books he wrote, most notably *Ethics*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, and *Letters and Papers From Prison*.

"(American theologian) Reinhold Niebuhr had a lot of intellectual capital,


but not the same kind of moral capital (as Bonhoeffer)," Haynes said in an interview, contrasting the two major 20th-century Protestant figures. "Everyone wants some of that."

"There is just a sort of seamlessness between Bonhoeffer's life, his work, and the decisions he made. He was single-minded and consistent."

Bonhoeffer was a product of a solidly privileged Prussian background in pre-war Germany who traveled intermittently. He lived for a year in New York, where he studied at Union Theological Seminary as a student of Niebuhr's and attended worship services in Harlem.

Bonhoeffer seemed destined for a secure life in the German Lutheran church or the academy. But the baleful events of his day intervened, forcing the young Lutheran pastor to face moral responsibility—his, his nation's, and his church's—in the wake of the mounting evil of Nazism.

"Nearly everyone acknowledges that it's Bonhoeffer's life, rather than his theology, that makes him a man worthy of honor and emulation," said Haynes, who grew up, by his own description, "in an evangelical subculture" and describes himself now as "a liberal Protestant with an empathy for conservative Christians."

"Maybe Bonhoeffer is a reminder that the measure of true faith is the way we treat each other and the sacrifices we are willing to make to learn about, communicate with, and defend each other. 

Chris Herlinger is a writer for Religion News Service.

### RESOURCES

• *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint*, was published by Fortress Press in 2004. Cover price: \$14.95. It is available through Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.

• *Theologians Under Hitler* is a DVD documentary that con-

trasts theologians who supported Hitler during the Nazi era with those, including Bonhoeffer, who chose to stand against him. The DVD is \$25 for an individual copy, \$75 with religious institution license for public showing. A study guide is available for \$8.50. Details are at [www.vitalvisuals.com/tuh.htm](http://www.vitalvisuals.com/tuh.htm).



# What happens when the funds run dry?

by Wally Landes

## BRETHREN HOMES FACE INCREASING PRESSURE IN PROVIDING UNCOMPENSATED CARE

**I**n March 1999 my mother was living in a townhouse on the outskirts of Waynesboro, Va. One night, residents in her development found her wandering at night in a snowstorm. She had taken her trash down the lane to the dumpster and could not find her way back home.

In the frenzy of medical and psychiatric evaluations that followed, she was determined to be suffering from Alzheimer's disease. With aggressive support and supervision, we were able to keep her in her home for another year. But by April 2000, the task was beyond our family's ability to manage. Luckily for us, there was an opening at Bridgewater (Va.) Home; she was admitted in May of that year.

In the months immediately following my mother's admission her countenance brightened, her smile returned as her formerly rich social life was reinstated, and her moods evened out as medications were adjusted and regularly administered. Her general appearance improved and

her nutritional needs were much better met than they had been. She felt better.

For these last years of my mother's life, her status as a human being and her lot in life greatly benefited.

An added benefit was the one to my family: the relieved anxiety we children experienced. Behind us were the growing exasperation of finding people to sit with or tend to mom, concern over her increasing needs, and the strain of "parenting" our mother. The burden of those concerns that my siblings and I had shouldered was all but abated. What a relief!

There remained only one worry, the financial concern. It would take more than my entire monthly income to cover the costs of my mother's care, from residential costs, medications, supplemental insurance, and incidentals. The quick sale of my mother's residence provided a nest egg for funding her care, but those funds were soon depleted, making her dependent on the benevolence of the Bridgewater Home.

I could not afford the cost—even my

fair share of the cost—of my own mother's care, which means my siblings and I shifted the burden of care to an institution. The institution has no choice but to shift that burden to the constituency that supports it: the district, the congregations, and the community.

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In Acts 6:1, we get this report: "Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution." Judging from this scripture text, from the earliest days of Christianity there have been struggles over the care of the elderly, including particular concern over the "haves" and the "have-nots."

As early as 1760, and for the next decade, the Germantown congregation of the German Baptist Brethren met in the Pettikoffer home that had been deeded to the church. When the meetinghouse we now call the Germantown Church in





**“Is it ethical for followers of Jesus who have been blessed with adequate financial resources to plan to shift the costs for long-term care away from themselves onto the shoulders of the homes and our congregations?”**

—Brian Black, former Association of Brethren Caregivers board member and Brethren Village staff member, now in private legal practice. Black was addressing the issue of “artificial impoverishment” in an ABC publication (see page 16).

Philadelphia was built in 1770, the vacated Pettikoffer House was turned over to house aging members of that congregation. This event seems the ostensible beginning of Brethren efforts at long-term care for the aged of their number.

Within Brethren history, the earliest effort by a district to establish a home for the aging appears to be what is now known as Timbercrest Home in Northern Indiana District. Originally conceived at a district conference in 1880, it actually opened in 1889 at Mexico, Ind., as an “Old Folks and Orphans Home.” After 1938, it was known as the Mexico Home until 1968, when it was renamed Timbercrest.

Meanwhile, in 1905, the Fahrney-Keedy Home was launched near Boonsboro, Md. Across the denomination, the move was on: to build homes, places of benevolent care, not-for-profit institutions that extended the caring concern of the church to people whose life journeys were nearing completion.

Brethren Homes have indicated in their founding principles a not-for-profit status with an attending charitable intent.

The hope—the promise even—was to provide care regardless of ability to pay.

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Management guru Peter Drucker once said, “Most non-profit organizations cannot answer two basic questions: ‘What business are we in?’ and ‘How is business?’”

For good reasons—Gospel reasons—Brethren long-term care facilities have mounted admirable efforts to provide care to those who cannot afford it. Their respective boards have seen such care as part of the “business we are in.” However, a crisis is growing around the lack of a cogent answer to the second question.

As government funding dries up, as the state reneges on its commitment to poorer citizens and shifts the burden of care to “faith-based initiatives,” as actuarial reports show ever-increasing longevity of Americans, as liability insurance premiums skyrocket (the bulk of which is directly tied to nursing care), and as the fiscal bubble of the technology-driven stock market bursts, business is getting worse. It is painfully clear that Brethren cannot

engage in the business of uncompensated care as we have been doing it. It is not at all clear how to do business otherwise.

As one administrator put it, “Uncompensated care has long been the mole on the back of the homes. Now that the mole has changed color, we don’t know how to talk about it.” But talk we must.

Jim Weaver, financial officer at the Bridgewater Home, said in 2002 that costs for charity care there crossed the \$1.9 million mark that year. Annual drives to offset that amount have netted about \$200,000, and a charitable care endowment fund has a balance of about \$5 million. Another home reported in a survey that uncompensated care was costing it nearly \$4 million per year, or roughly 13 percent of that home’s annual operating budget.

The 2000 census estimated there are 35 million Americans over the age of 65 (roughly 13 percent of our population—a 15 percent increase from 1990). That number is expected to explode over the next 30 years, with a projected 70 million Americans over the age of 65 by the year 2030 (20 percent of our population).

Perhaps most telling is that the over-85 population (currently estimated at 4.2 million), is expected to grow at an even faster rate during the next 30 years. The challenges presented by this literal aging explosion are exacerbated by deepening economic uncertainty and the ever-increasing pressure upon government-funded reimbursement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

With the rate of health care costs dra-

## WHAT IS UNCOMPENSATED CARE?

“Uncompensated care is non-reimbursed care provided to residents at retirement communities whose daily living costs are not covered by normal revenue: their own assets, family ability or willingness to pay, private-pay insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare.” —from “The Burden of Uncompensated Care in Brethren Retirement Centers and the Church,” published by the Association of Brethren Caregivers

Courtesy of Fellowship of Brethren Homes/ABC



matically outstripping the overall rate of inflation, and with the return on investment recognized by our Brethren communities continuing to decline, it is apparent that the uncompensated care challenge

lies, and to the Brethren facilities that often shoulder the challenge of providing this costly care at reduced rates.

**Get the facts:** An alarming number of people believe government programs of

savings and investments to provide for their care in their senior years.

**Moral issues:** Another concern in long-term care funding is the tendency of the elderly to make pre-need distributions of accumulated assets to heirs, creating an artificial impoverishment. There is a growing sense that the church and the Brethren homes need to mount an educational effort that speaks not only to personal stewardship of assets and long-term care insurance, but also to the moral issues attending unfair or fraudulent asset management.

## Jesus' instructions in Matthew 25 to care for those who are hungry or thirsty or a stranger or sick and needing care remain at the heart of who we are as Brethren. Indeed, many of our Brethren retirement communities were founded upon these very words of Jesus.

faced by our 23 Brethren retirement communities will increase exponentially.

Nevertheless, Jesus' instructions in Matthew 25 to care for those who are hungry or thirsty or a stranger or sick and needing care remain at the heart of who we are as Brethren. Indeed, many of our Brethren retirement communities were founded upon these very words of Jesus.

. . .

With the challenge before us, how do we respond as members of the community of faith? We believe the responsibility lies collectively with each brother and sister in the body of Christ, with our local congregations, with our districts, with our denomination, and with each of our Brethren retirement communities.

### Our response as individuals

**Commit to planning:** Recent statistics suggest that nearly 3 out of every 4 people will require some form of assistive care as they age. Many live in denial as they approach their senior years, believing they will be the exception and will not require such care. With the average monthly cost for nursing home care exceeding \$5,000, the cost of failing to plan properly can be devastating both to seniors and their fami-

lies, and to the Brethren facilities that often shoulder the challenge of providing this costly care at reduced rates. Medicaid and Medicare will provide for their care should those needs arise. However, these people fail to realize that Medicare offers essentially no long-term care benefits. Likewise, Medicaid is fundamentally a health plan for the poor and is under increasing pressure to survive in its present form. God's people are not called to rely upon the uncertainty of government programs or to artificially impoverish themselves in order to avail themselves of benefits intended for the truly needy.

All individuals in the body of Christ have a responsibility to get the facts about paying for long-term care needs, to seek competent counsel regarding the planning options available, and to undertake appropriate advance planning as an act of life stewardship. For many, this planning could include acquiring a long-term care insurance policy or using other means of

### Our response as the greater body of Christ

**Congregational response:** Many congregations provide both monetary and volunteer support, as well as board-level leadership, to the Brethren homes. These are gifts that each of the communities truly celebrate and depend upon. However, as the costs of providing uncompensated care continue to mount, we urge each congregation, district, and denominational leader to challenge and encourage those within their care to plan for all phases of their lives.

**District response:** Districts should seek to partner with local Brethren retirement facilities in educating their constituents about this critical phase of life planning and to connect people with the vital care-

### STUDYING THE ISSUE

The Association of Brethren Caregivers—the Annual Conference agency that serves as liaison to the Brethren homes—initially formed an ad hoc benevolent care committee in fall 2002 to look at uncompensated care issues. Updates were given at Annual Conference and other meetings, and a number of resources were published (a listing, compiled for last year's Health Promotion Sunday, is at [www.brethren.org/abc/hps\\_theme/hps\\_05](http://www.brethren.org/abc/hps_theme/hps_05)). Work on uncompensated care continues, and other denominations have noted the Church of the Brethren is at the forefront of dealing with the issue.



## THE BRETHREN HOMES

giving ministries of these facilities. There are several models of partnership: In one district the retirement center, working together with the district board, carries out the program of an older adult ministry. In another, the CEOs of the retirement centers meet quarterly with the district minister. One district, in reference to uncompensated care concerns, formed a study committee made up of representatives from the retirement center and from the district.

### The response of Brethren retirement communities

These communities are undeniably faced with what appears to be an insurmountable challenge. Nevertheless, with God's help there are opportunities for the 23 communities to take the lead in creatively addressing the uncompensated care challenge (some would say "crisis"). Some suggested areas might include:

- Collaboration on development of uncompensated care policies that provide clear and consistent parameters for the use of limited resources available, in order to maximize the benefits received.
- Collaboration on the development of financial and management tools that allow all facilities to monitor and manage their uncompensated care costs and to assist in projecting future costs.
- Collaboration on the establishment of "best practices" for Brethren facilities surrounding this issue.
- Exploration and development of long-term care insurance plans and programs that could be made available at reduced costs to individuals throughout the denomination, particularly those age 45 to 60, where cost of insurance is generally modest.
- Collaborative development of educational programs and materials for use on an ongoing basis throughout the denomination to resource individuals, congregations, and districts—addressing the tremendous amount of

- **Brethren Hillcrest Homes**, La Verne, Calif.
- **The Brethren Home Community**, New Oxford, Pa.
- **Brethren Retirement Community**, Greenville, Ohio
- **Brethren Village**, Lancaster, Pa.
- **Bridgewater (Va.) Retirement Community**
- **Casa De Modesto** (Calif.)
- **The Cedars Inc.**, McPherson, Kan.
- **Church of the Brethren Home**, Windber, Pa.
- **Fahrney-Keedy Memorial Home Inc.**, Boonsboro, Md.
- **Garden Terrace and Garden Terrace West**, Wenatchee, Wash.
- **Good Shepherd Home**, Fostoria, Ohio
- **John Reed Homestead**, Limestone, Tenn.
- **Lebanon Valley Brethren Home**, Palmyra, Pa.
- **Northaven Retirement Residence and Assisted Living**, Seattle, Wash.
- **The Palms Estates of Highland County Inc.**, Lorida, Fla.
- **The Palms of Sebring** (Fla.)
- **Peter Becker Community**, Harleysville, Pa.
- **Pinecrest Community**, Mount Morris, Ill.
- **Pleasant Hill Village**, Girard, Ill.
- **Spurgeon Manor**, Dallas Center, Iowa
- **Timbercrest Senior Living Community**, North Manchester, Ind.
- **Village at Morrisons Cove**, Martinsburg, Pa.
- **West View Manor**, Wooster, Ohio

misunderstanding and misinformation surrounding long-term care planning.

• • •

The 23 Brethren retirement facilities serve in an increasingly complex and challenging ministry to seniors and their families. The mounting cost of providing uncompensated care is a financial Goliath in our midst.

Yet God is not calling the Church of the Brethren to shrink from the difficult challenge before it. Rather, individuals need to take responsibility for properly planning for their care needs in later life. Congregations,

districts, and the denomination are asked to challenge and educate their constituents.

Is it not our responsibility as citizens—and more so as Christians—to show compassionate care for the poor in the land? The burden of care seems heavy at times, but this is our calling. We hear the words of the Master: "Whoever takes care of the least of these my brethren has cared for me."

Wally Landes is senior pastor of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and chair of the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC) board. Portions of this article previously appeared in ABC publications on uncompensated care.



The horrors of war offer context for noticing that God is at work.

Prophetic action and words point to those purposes unfolding, sometimes in the midst of disturbing violence, sometimes in strange and unanticipated ways.

## 2 Kings: Descent into darkness

by Kim McDowell

**Knowing the end of a story changes the way it is told and heard.**

At the close of 2 Kings, Jerusalem is destroyed and its inhabitants exiled. Everything coming before this defining moment in this narrative is seen in its light. Kings either contribute toward the fall or toward deferring it. Prophets offer words of promise and words of warning. But the tale moves steadily toward its dark conclusion: God is so angered by Jerusalem and Judah that they are “cast out from (God’s) presence” (24:20).

Throughout Kings, walking with God leads to abundance. Serving other gods results in ultimate disaster. The first hearers and readers of these books were very likely the people of Israel in exile (some in Babylon, some in Egypt, some still in Judah and Israel). This work is both a reflection on what happened to them and a call to a different way of living, focused in God.

Continuing the story in unbroken form where 1 Kings ended, 2 Kings picks up with the transition from one prophet to another. (This division between 1 and 2 Kings may well have been an arbitrary one, with a break chosen at a natural point.) Elijah is taken up into heaven in a swirl of fire, chariots, and wind. The great prophet’s mantle passes to Elisha.

Quickly, we hear a series of remarkable, beloved stories of new life. In each of the accounts in chapter four, Elisha acts to embody God’s power. And where that power shapes life, there is fullness. A poor woman is freed from debt by the miraculous provision of enough oil to fill all the vessels she can borrow. A son—and a future—is granted to the Shunammite woman who hosts Elisha. The child is restored to life when it seems he will be lost. A pot of tainted stew is purified. Bread is multiplied to provide nourishment for all.

Here, Elisha’s message is clear: With God, more is possible than can be imagined.

And those possibilities are for all the people of the world, as the story of Naaman (5:1-19) demonstrates. Naaman is a Syrian general, an enemy of Israel. Through the agency of a nameless Israelite servant girl, he finds his way to Elisha. The prophet instructs him to wash seven times in the Jordan River, and when he does so, he is healed. (The path twists, in part because Naaman first assumes that kings, not prophets, hold power, and then because he resists the prescription offered by Elisha. In the end, though (5:14), “his flesh (is) restored like the flesh of a little child.”) Just as importantly, readers of Kings realize that God’s gifts are for the stranger as well as the insider.

Through the remainder of the book, imperial powers (Syria, Assyria, Egypt, Babylon) threaten Israel and Judah. Though none of



them is permanent, they each exercise dominance at times. The horrors of war offer context for noticing that God is at work. Prophetic action and words point to those purposes unfolding, sometimes in the midst of disturbing violence, sometimes in strange and unanticipated ways.

But the key tension that underlies this theological history remains the same. The kings (and their people) have followed after other gods. They have taken on the practices—religious, economic, and political—of others. Such accommodations represent deep hazards to the people of God. We, of course, are invited to wonder about parallel wandering in our day. The corresponding ease of our accommodation to consumerism or trust in political powers can be seen as equally hazardous. As Martin Luther once said about the first commandment, “Whatsoever your heart clings to and relies upon, that properly is your God.”

In Kings, the formula for evaluating a lifetime or a dynasty is brief. Either the king did “what was right” or “what was evil” in the eyes of God. Both are defined by the writer according to the loyalty given to God’s ways. Even kings who ruled for long decades may get little comment other than the standard words of judgment. The narrative moves back and forth between northern and southern kingdoms, recording the marks of each. Many fail in accountability and faithfulness.

2 Kings 17 reports the end of the northern kingdom of Israel by 721 BC. Finally, the north has gone too far for too long. Assyria takes the city of Samaria, and the people are scattered. God has at last allowed their destructive choices to

overcome them. The text wants to remind us that even in such tumultuous political turns, divine intentions are played out. We can’t pretend that history doesn’t interest God. This is a deity concerned with more than personal piety.

The southern kingdom of Judah is preserved, for the moment. Jerusalem remains the sign of God’s covenant with David, a promise that is unailing. There, in the temple and the seat of the Davidic line, the people have had access to the covenant promises. But the protection of the city is only temporary. The south is no less subject to the dangers of lost focus.

The narrator’s chronicle of the kings nears conclusion with a final trio:

- Hezekiah is noted as doing right as David had done. In response to the threat of the Assyrian Sennacherib, Hezekiah seeks the prayers of the prophet Isaiah, asking for God’s help. Things look impossibly grim. But this king trusts in God despite the evidence. In response, according to the story, 185,000 Assyrian troops are destroyed by an angel.

Whatever the historical details, the people of Judah understood God to have delivered Jerusalem in miraculous fashion.

- Manassah, who succeeds his father, is viewed as quintessentially evil. His compromises on all fronts are seen as refusal to be accountable to God in any way. The long, sad, history of the kings who wandered culminates in Manassah. Life for the kingdom is in jeopardy.

- Josiah, though, is a reforming king. His rule, according to this description, is a model of genuine faith. Returning to the traditions of old, abolishing non-Yahweh sites and practices, seeking

God’s will, Josiah offers an example of what may yet be.

However, though four kings remain, the end for Judah quickly draws near. As the century turns, Babylon has replaced Assyria as the imperial power with which to reckon. Though Judah is a small nation, it has interests for the powerful. Jerusalem is besieged first under Jehoiachin. The king is captured and deported; that he is not killed remains a sign of hope for the people of Israel. A future may still be available.

Nebuchadnezzar assaults the city. Fire, looting, and the forced removal of many leaders and citizens decimates Jerusalem. The temple, symbol of God’s presence in Jerusalem, is sacked. The fall is final in 587 BC. For the people of Israel, this is the end of an era and a world. The motion that began with Solomon’s attraction to the foreign at the start of Kings has reached its culmination. The people of God are scattered. Some are taken to Babylon. Some flee to Egypt. Some remain in Israel to cope with devastating loss.

For us, who read of these things so much later, some paradox emerges. We are left with a profound encouragement to seek the way of God (and abundant life) lest much be lost. At the same time, we are offered a glimpse into the faith that affirms God’s hand under all. Even in the face of deep trauma and loss, of systems overturned, the designs of God are at work. **W**

Kim McDowell is pastor of University Park Church of the Brethren in Hyattsville, Md.

MESSENGER’S “Journey through the Word” series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in February: 1 Chronicles, by Bob Neff.

## 2 KINGS: A CLOSER LOOK

**When written:** Likely completed after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, addressing an initial audience of exiles.

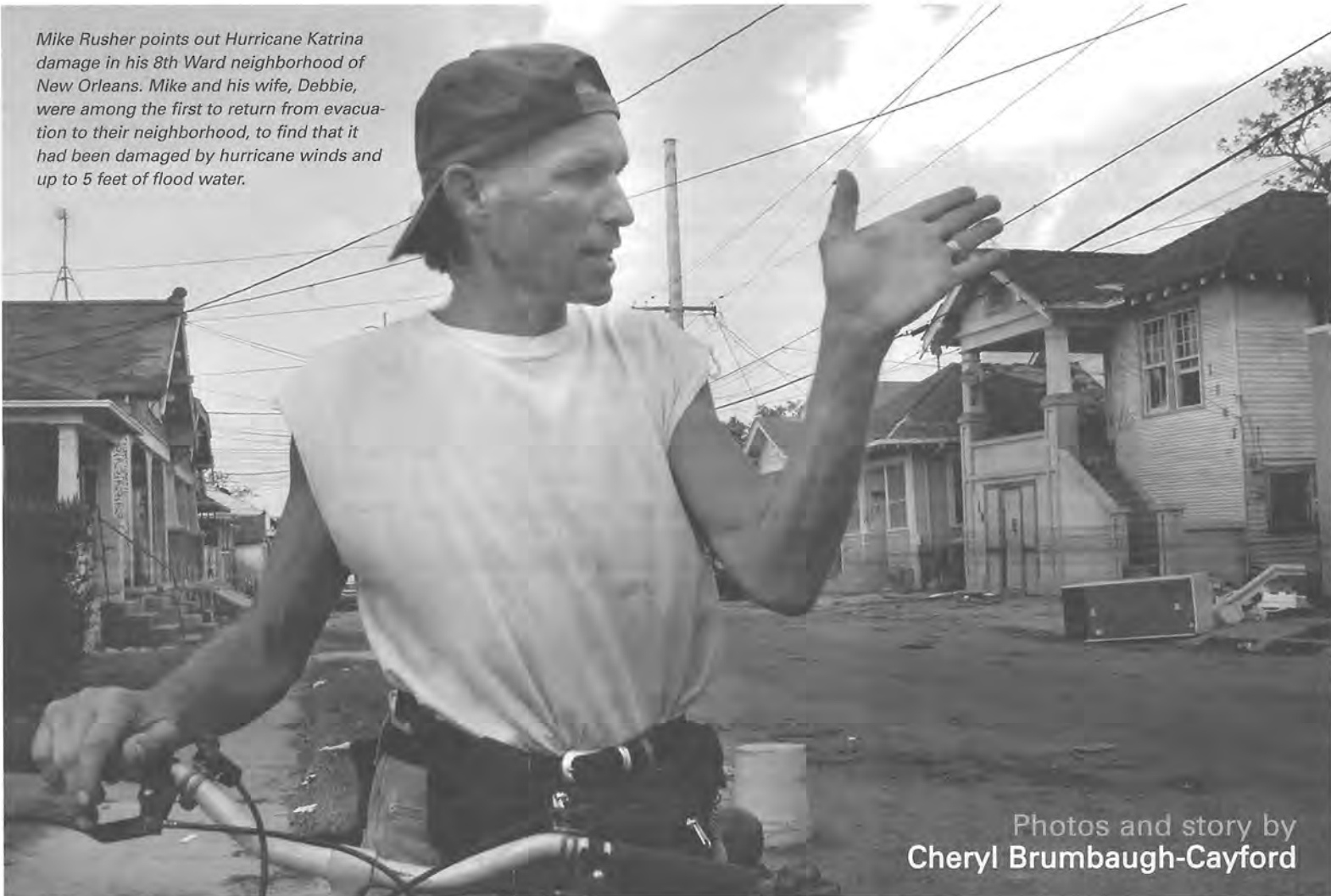
**Famous stories:** Elijah’s ascent into heaven, the woman in debt whose borrowed vessels are filled with abundant oil, a Shunammite woman’s hospitality to Elisha and his restoration of her cherished son, Naaman’s healing, the violent death of Jezebel, the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Well-known verses:** “A chariot of fire and horses of fire separated (Elijah and Elisha) and Elijah ascended in a whirl-

wind into heaven” (2:11); “Go wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean” (the prophet’s advice to Naaman, 5:10); “and he did what was right/what was evil in the sight of the Lord . . .” (the formula of judgment repeated over and over in response to the kings of Israel and Judah).

**Other notes:** Some events in Kings are also described in Chronicles, and serve as the setting for prophetic voices heard in other books of the Bible (see the parallel between 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37, for example).

*Mike Rusher points out Hurricane Katrina damage in his 8th Ward neighborhood of New Orleans. Mike and his wife, Debbie, were among the first to return from evacuation to their neighborhood, to find that it had been damaged by hurricane winds and up to 5 feet of flood water.*



Photos and story by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

## Who will wash the feet? Many answer, 'Here am I' Faith, volunteers boost spirits of Gulf Coast hurricane victims

**"Who will wash the feet?" asked a sign at a church in New Orleans.**

The question was glimpsed through a car window as a small group representing the General Board took a short tour of the city's 9th Ward and other areas flooded by Hurricane Katrina. The group also visited other areas of the Gulf Coast affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Nov. 7-9.

They met many people who are answering the question, "Here am I."

• • •

Mike and Debbie Rusher are among those "washing feet"—serving in the spirit of Christ—even as their own lives have been turned upside-down.

A month after they returned to New

Orleans to find that their home in the 8th Ward had been flooded by at least 5 feet of water, the Rushers spoke with heartfelt concern about the welfare of the neighborhood, and the future of New Orleans.

Originally from Maine and Indiana—Mike still holds his membership at Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind.—the Rushers have called New Orleans home for 10 years. They have spent the last three renovating their home, a beautiful building more than 120 years old with classic New Orleans architectural features. It was a "crack house" before they bought it, but Mike persuaded Debbie it had lots of potential.

When the evacuation order came, the

couple ended up living for several weeks in their motor home, on an exhausting and frightening trip through Mississippi, Alabama, and all the way to Florida.

One of the first families to return to the neighborhood, they thought the house looked untouched . . . until they went inside. Then they found the destruction wreaked by flood waters on the ground floor, and water damage on the second floor from open roof sections torn off by hurricane winds.

Since then, they have been sorting and cleaning possessions, tearing out wet dry-wall, drying the roof, and eradicating mold as best they can. They live in the motor home parked next to the house, with a generator for electricity and an

upstairs bathroom with city water service. It's grueling, depressing, smelly work. But the worst part has been the loneliness. Most of their neighbors have not yet returned. Some have come only on weekends from places where their families evacuated. Debbie is concerned that most of New Orleans has not had the opportunity to witness the immensity of the changes in the city. "Those who aren't here yet haven't yet had time to process" the shock, she said.

And, "people are throwing their lives out right and left," she added. An elderly neighbor became so focused on cleaning up that she prepared to throw away furniture and belongings that could be salvaged. Debbie tried to persuade her not to throw away everything she had, the belongings that represent her whole life.

The loneliness has been mitigated by the help of friends and the Mutual Aid Association, which gave the Rushers personalized attention. "If we'd used one of the big insurance companies we'd be waiting for a year," said Mike.

The Rushers have done what they can. They have worked with volunteer groups camped out in Washington Park distributing aid. Mike has set up a generator for the 9th Ward Distribution Center. Debbie is beginning to see herself as a representative for the needs of the neighborhood.

"It's real rough living for most of the people who are volunteering," Mike said. But if it weren't for the volunteers, "we'd be still open to the storms."

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The tarps on Emily Lee Martin's home give it away: This was one of the houses damaged by Hurricane Katrina. It's not just the roof that needs fixing; inside the



Larry Wittig of Shenandoah District repairs hurricane damage in Citronelle, Ala., as a volunteer with Brethren Disaster Response. The house is just down the road from Cedar Creek Church of the Brethren.

house a wall must be replaced because of water damage.

During the week of Nov. 6-12 the Brethren Disaster Response crew working in Citronelle, Ala., was in the process of repairing the wall for Martin, a member of Cedar Creek Church of the Brethren. The church, spared the worst of Katrina, is serving as the host site for the disaster response project.

Martin's home is a shelter for her daughter, whose house in Pascagoula, Miss., was destroyed by Katrina's 20-foot storm surge. Her late husband, Bernard Martin, had been a volunteer with Brethren Disaster Response.

"He helped out, and then they helped me out," Martin said.

Cedar Creek likewise wanted to serve as a church, co-pastor Steven Petcher said, in part because of the congregation's history of having been served by others. In 1980 the church building was burned by an arsonist, and volunteers helped the congregation rebuild.

Now it's the church's turn to help others rebuild.

• • •

Roanoke (La.) Church of the Brethren and Lake Charles (La.) Community Church of the

Brethren, joint hosts of the Brethren Disaster Response project in the Lake Charles area, are working with a variety of other groups and churches to respond to Hurricane Rita.

With the help of the United Methodist Church in Roanoke, which offered its parsonage to house volunteers, crews are doing clean-up jobs in a large area from the border of Texas on the west to Jennings, La., on the east.


Roanoke pastor Jim Balmer and his wife, Jackie, are prime movers of the project. Balmer has been in Roanoke for 14 years, the last three as pastor of the church. Helping out are project directors and Brethren Volunteer Service workers Phil and Joan Taylor and Jodi Eller.

With the Balmers and Church World Service representative Neil Molenaar, the BVSers are attending community meetings, hoping to create a more coordinated response in the area. In the meantime, the crews find no lack of work—four to six jobs a day.

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Katherine Boeger, a member of Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, quit her job selling timeshares to volunteer with Brethren Disaster Response for six weeks in Louisiana and Alabama.

"They've been very generous," she says of the people she has met. For example, a Lion's Club arranged for the use of a Bobcat for heavy jobs. One evening after the volunteers returned from a hard day's work, members of the Lion's Club arrived with a pot of home-made gumbo.

"There seems to be a lot of faith here," Boeger said. "People are thanking God for their blessings." 

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is news director for the Church of the Brethren General Board. She traveled to the Gulf Coast in November.

Neil Molenaar of Church World Service, right, chats with Roy Winter, far left, director of Emergency Response for the General Board, and Brethren Disaster Response volunteer Jose Longoria, a member of Falfurrias (Texas) Church of the Brethren. Molenaar is working with Brethren and others in the Lake Charles, La., area to coordinate cleanup and rebuilding following Hurricane Rita.





Nevin Dulabaum

**The Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee**, elected at the 2005 Annual Conference to review the current plan and respond with recommendations regarding the denomination's participation in the plan, began its work with an organizational meeting in Elgin, Ill., Sept. 11-12. The committee is composed of James Gible (Atlantic Northeast), Willie Hisey Pierson (Illinois/Wisconsin), Brian Markle (Southern Pennsylvania), and Donna Shumate (Southeastern). The committee called Shumate as chair of the committee and Hisey Pierson as recorder. The full copy of the resolution that called for the committee, which has been asked to bring recommendations to the 2006 Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, is available at [www.brethren.org/ac/medicalplan](http://www.brethren.org/ac/medicalplan). At left, the study committee gathered information by meeting with Wil Nolen, Jeff Garber, and Donna March of Brethren Benefit Trust to gather facts relating to all aspects of the current denominational medical plan. Comments from individuals and congregations can be sent to [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org). Additional information about the committee's work will be available at the Annual Conference page of the website at [www.brethren.org/ac/medicalplan](http://www.brethren.org/ac/medicalplan).

**Cross-Cultural Roundtable promotes multicultural church**

To the question, "Are we here because we are committed to a multicultural church?" came the resounding answer, "Yes!" This emphatic response arose from Church of the Brethren members and leaders convened first in April and then in a follow-up session Aug. 30-31 in Richmond, Ind., by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

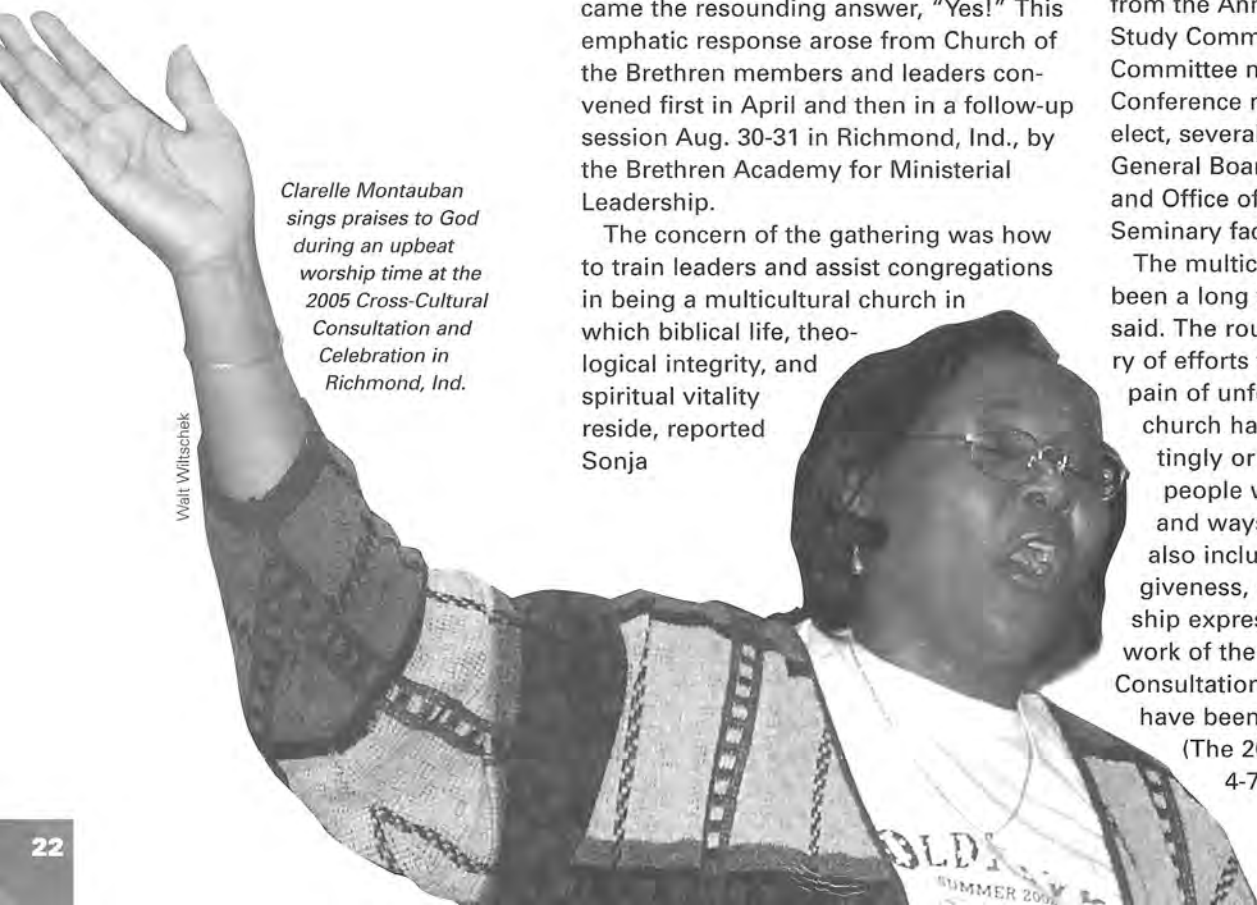
The concern of the gathering was how to train leaders and assist congregations in being a multicultural church in which biblical life, theological integrity, and spiritual vitality reside, reported Sonja

Griffith, pastor of First Central Church of the Brethren in Kansas City.

Participants included many who have been working at cross-cultural issues for years, including pastors, a representative from the Annual Conference Intercultural Study Committee, Cross-Cultural Steering Committee members, the Annual Conference moderator and moderator-elect, several district executive ministers, General Board Congregational Life Team and Office of Ministry staff, and Bethany Seminary faculty and administrators.

The multicultural church vision has been a long time in the making, Griffith said. The roundtable recounted the history of efforts toward this vision, noting the pain of unfortunate instances when the church has not welcomed or even, wittingly or unwittingly, driven away people whose skin color, language, and ways are "different." The history also includes confession, healing, forgiveness, and recently a joy and fellowship expressed in the worship and work of the yearly Cross-Cultural Consultations and Celebrations, which have been held annually since 1999.

(The 2006 event is planned for May 4-7 in Lancaster, Pa. See



Clarelle Montauban sings praises to God during an upbeat worship time at the 2005 Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration in Richmond, Ind.

Walt Witschek



## Brethren Benefit Trust makes several organizational changes

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) this fall announced organizational changes that will affect structure and personnel.

Effective Jan. 3, Pension Plan and Employee Financial Services will be combined with Insurance Plans into one department named Employee

Benefit Plans. Jeff Garber, who has been director of Insurance Plans, will become the director of this new department.

Other staff in the new department will include Donna March as manager of Insurance Operations; Lori Domich as staff for Member Services, Insurance; and Peggy Bruell as staff for Member



## CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN BENEFIT TRUST

Services, Pension Plan and Employee Financial Services.

Information Services management and systems oversight in BBT has moved from the Communications department to the Financial Operations department. Laura Nedli is the director of this combined department, and Eric Thompson, network administrator, has moved to this department, as well. Veronica Aragon has assumed increased responsibilities as system specialist.

Based on feedback received by BBT board members, the agency's Communications Team is finalizing and soon will begin implementing a plan that calls for increased time and focus on marketing. Marketing is a prominent priority in BBT's current strategic plan. Nevin Dulabaum will continue to serve as director of the Communications department.

[www.brethren.org/genbd/clm/ct/CrossCultural.html](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/clm/ct/CrossCultural.html).)

Participants posed a number of questions regarding the needs of the church for training leadership in cross-cultural work. Topics included educating for cultural and ethnic differences, and developing ongoing self-awareness of those differences and how they affect all aspects of church life. Small groups considered responses to these questions. Naming barriers to cross-cultural leadership in church life was also important.

Opportunities for action were highlighted, including the potential of the upcoming "Together" conversations, development of practical ideas to share with churches and districts, sharing with the Annual Conference study committee, and relationship-building with Brethren Press, the 300th Anniversary Committee, General Board staff, and other church agencies.

"As the roundtable ended, the group's passion had not subsided, and the commitment was even stronger than at the beginning," Griffith said. "The cross-cultural church is coming alive with hope for new life and a new day!"

Most recently, a Cross-Cultural Music Tour visited congregations and other Church of the Brethren facilities in Kansas

Walt Wiltschek



Current Annual Conference moderator-elect Belita Mitchell, left, and Joseph Craddock of Germantown Church of the Brethren in Philadelphia are all smiles as they welcome people to the 2005 Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration in Richmond, Ind.

and Missouri from Oct. 30-Nov. 3. Participants were Gilbert Romero, pastor of Bella Vista Church of the Brethren, Los Angeles; Don Mitchell, music leader at Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren; Marilyn Montauban, singer from First Haitian Church of the Brethren in Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Duane Grady, staff member for the General Board's Congregational Life Teams.

## UPCOMINGEVENTS

**Jan. 16-Feb. 11**  
**General Board Global Mission Partnerships**  
Nigeria workcamp

**Feb. 10-12 Gather 'Round curriculum**  
training event,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

**Feb. 24-26 "Together: Conversations on Being the Church"**  
training event, New Windsor, Md.

**Mar. 9-13 General Board meeting,**  
New Windsor, Md.

**Mar. 10-12 Eastern Regional Youth Conference,**  
Elizabethtown (Pa.)  
College

**Mar. 24-26 Association of Brethren Caregivers**  
board meeting,  
Elgin, Ill.

**Mar. 31-Apr 2 Plains Regional Youth Conference,**  
McPherson (Kan.)  
College

**Mar. 31-Apr. 2 Roundtable Regional Youth Conference,**  
Bridgewater (Va.)  
College

# EMERGENCY DISASTER FUND

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund are sending more than \$350,000 to continue response to the hurricanes of 2005 and the devastating earthquake in Pakistan, as well as other disasters around the globe.

Donations to the Emergency Disaster Fund were nearing \$3 million in 2005, totaling \$2,766,034 from Jan. 1 through mid-November—far above the usual level of giving. Figures for both income and outgoing allocations continued to soar as the 56th grant of the year was made from the fund on Nov. 21. Through that date, nearly \$1.5 million had been allocated for use in 28 countries.

"Our ministries and our donors have had the opportunity to do good for a great many more people than the norm this year," said Ken Neher, director of Funding and Donor Development for the General Board.

About one-third of the giving designated for the Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami is being held for the two-to-five-year response phase of the recovery effort, said Roy Winter, director of Emergency Response. "It's important to support the long-term work since the church had such a great response" in giving to the EDF, he said.

In more immediate responses, a major grant of \$150,000 aided survivors of the massive earthquake in southern Asia and Pakistan, continuing Church of the Brethren support of the Church World Service (CWS) response and helping with emergency needs of food and shelter, along with preparation for long-term work of reconstruction, sanitation, and psycho-social support.

Another large allocation, for \$100,000, added to Brethren support for CWS work following Hurricane Katrina. The funds helped deploy Disaster Response and Recovery Liaisons, Tools of Hope, blankets, and Gift of the Heart Kits, and supported long-term recovery organizations. The money also provided spiritual care and care for caregivers, and a relocation program for 500 displaced Americans.

## Other recent grants have included:

- \$42,000 to purchase and ship 1,000 Clean Up Buckets for CWS following hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- \$20,000 to CWS for relief work following tropical storm Stan in Central America.
- \$20,000 to support a Brethren Disaster Response project in Belmont County, Ohio.
- \$15,000 to support of a Church World Service appeal for continuing relief and rehabilitation in Angola.
- \$10,000 to support a Church World Service appeal for drought assistance and pending famine in the West African nation of Burkina Faso.
- \$5,000 for Disaster Child Care volunteers preparing to respond in southern Florida following Hurricane Wilma.
- \$5,000 to CWS in the aftermath of Hurricane Wilma.
- \$3,000 to CWS following tornados in Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, and Iowa.

## On Earth Peace board reviews survey results

The On Earth Peace board of directors and staff met Sept. 6-7 at Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. The theme focused on "Seeking."

A morning was spent reviewing responses from a survey conducted at Annual Conference. Strong themes that emerged included the importance of making a connection to scripture and Christian faith in the work of peacemaking, and the call for peace work to be done in the family, community, and church contexts, with domestic violence, church conflict, and communities needs mentioned most often. "When naming visions for peacemaking within the Church of the Brethren, responses were overwhelming hopeful and positive," a report said.

For fiscal year 2005, ending Sept. 30, income covered expenses with both running ahead of projections. The board approved a balanced budget of \$502,000 for fiscal year 2006.

Committee reports included the advancement committee's new ideas for donors; a note that contributions from congregations and individuals are above last year; an updated Personnel Policy Manual; welcoming new staff; and noting the re-election of Debbie Roberts and Ken Edwards to the board, as well as the election at Annual Conference of Sarah Quinter Malone. The nominating committee also reported an initiative to identify additional roles for constituents not serving on the board, such as educational, spiritual, and fundraising roles.

Staff reported upcoming events and initiatives including increased interest in intervention or mediation services, co-sponsorship with Christian Peacemaker Teams of a delegation to Israel/Palestine in January, and coordination of a nationwide network on countering military recruitment in schools. Staff also reported on work with consultant Erika Thorne on becoming an anti-racist organization.

Other topics of discussion included financial aid for draft non-registrants, investments in the Caterpillar Corporation, and the new "C.O.D.E" peace game designed by board member Verdena Lee, in which players think about their beliefs and whether they are conscientious objectors.

The board called a new executive committee: Bev Weaver, chair; Ken Frantz, vice chair; Laaree Hersch Meyer, secretary; Doris Abdullah, treasurer; and Verdena Lee and Robbie Miller, at-large members. The board recognized board member Eugene Lichty for his excellent leadership and faithful witness.



## Review and Evaluation committee begins work

The Review and Evaluation study committee, elected at Annual Conference in Peoria, Ill., this past summer, held its initial meeting Nov. 11-12 in Elgin, Ill. Paul Hoffman of Western Plains District was selected as chair; Michaela Camps of Atlantic Southeast District was selected as recorder. Other members of the committee are Rebecca Baile Crouse of Missouri/Arkansas District, Craig Gandy of Middle Pennsylvania District, and James Martinez of Pacific Southwest District.

In addition to organizing, the committee explored reasons for the study, what research needs to be done, and what dialogue is needed with the denomination. Annual Conference executive director Lerry Fogle reported that the committee will study existing structure and programs, looking at the goals and purpose of each Annual Conference agency and how they relate to each other and the mission of the Church of the Brethren, being mindful of the spirituality, balance, and effectiveness of the denomination.

A general timeline was established, and committee member assignments were made. Vehicles for communicating with the Review and Evaluation committee include interviews with denominational leaders, online surveys, questionnaires for all congregations and church members to be distributed through the Source packet, and listening sessions at Annual Conference 2006. Comments, affirmations, and suggestions for the committee may be sent to [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org).

## New endowment supports Brethren mission work

The General Board has created a unique mission endowment through the donation and solicitation efforts of Gerald and Eleanor Roller of Roanoke, Va. The "Established Mission Endowment" was designed initially to support the "Lafiya" or Rural Health Program in Nigeria for the next five years, after which it can more broadly support existing Church of the Brethren mission efforts.

The Rural Health Program was begun by Church of the Brethren mission staff and has been highly acclaimed internationally. The village-based program serves

a large population in the rural areas of northeast Nigeria, from where Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) emerged. The program uses village-based health workers to offer basic health education and immunizations. Now operated by EYN, the program generates some income but requires supplemental support to adequately serve rural communities.

The Rollers have served repeatedly with the Rural Health ministry through the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships. For more information see [www.brethren.org/genbd/global\\_mission/](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/global_mission/).

## Personnel moves

• **Haruun Ruun**, executive secretary for the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) and shared staff with the Church of the Brethren General Board's Global Mission Partnerships, has accepted a position as presidential advisor to the government of Sudan as it is being re-

formed based on a peace agreement signed in 2005. Ruun will have a portfolio as "peace and tolerance advisor." He will assume this role, based in the capital of Khartoum, following the process of handing over his responsibilities with NSCC in Nairobi, Kenya. He has been a part of the Church of the Brethren staff team in Sudan since 1996, jointly supported with the Presbyterian Church USA and the Reformed Church in America.

• **Carol Mason** began work Dec. 5 as coordinator of the General Board's Congregational Life Team for Area 3, including the districts of Atlantic Southeast, Shenandoah, Southeastern, Virginia, and West Marva. She is a former General Board mission worker who served as co-founder and director of the Technical School of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Since then she has taught public school, directed congregational volunteer ministries, and served as moderator for Oregon/Washington District. She is completing the Training in Ministry program.



## Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS)/Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) training Unit 266

has begun service. Volunteer placements and home congregations are: Back row: Ron Brinton, New Fairview Church of the Brethren, York, Pa., to Good Shepherd Food Bank, Lewiston, Maine; Christopher Clayton, New Paris (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, to Good Shepherd Food Bank; Dwight Stauffer, White Oak Church of the Brethren, Manheim, Pa., to Good Shepherd Food Bank; Ben Brinton, New Fairview Church of the Brethren, to Good Shepherd Food Bank. Front row: Laura Brinton and Megan Brinton, New Fairview Church of the Brethren, to Good Shepherd Food Bank; Tonia Little, Blue Rock Independent Brethren Church, to Good Shepherd Food Bank; Anna Brinton, New Fairview Church of the Brethren to Good Shepherd Food Bank; and Sonya Little, Upton Church of the Brethren, Greencastle, Pa., to Maine Home School Project, Lewiston, Maine. For more information on BVS, visit [www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org](http://www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org).

## Proverbs: Commentary emphasizes practicality

**W**hen was the last time you heard—or preached—a sermon on the book of Proverbs?

When preparing sermons, Anabaptist pastors tend to gather in droves around Gospel texts, so a book like Proverbs rarely gets exposure on Sunday mornings. Part of the reason for this neglect has to do with Proverbs lacking a narrative structure. It is instead a collection of sayings often not connected to one another from verse to verse.



TIM SCHULTZ

An initial browsing of the new Believers Church Bible Commentary on this book produced a few first impressions. The first is that author John W. Miller holds impressive scholarly credentials along with practical ministry experiences; a second impression is that several

title headings in the book might make for an intriguing sermon series: “Jesus on the Subject of Whispering,” “Conflicted and Transformed Hearts,” and “A Journey into Immediacy with God” are just a few.

Something else that caught my attention is the fact that Miller has chosen to base the commentary on the New International Version, in part because the NIV preserves gender-specific references (son and sons). He explains that to appreciate the original meaning of the book of Proverbs—without disregarding its application to all who read it—the book should be understood as a manual for young men, one that includes advice about loving one’s wife and creating a home that honors her, and other such women-affirming material.

The realistic goal in studying Proverbs is not to memorize its multitude of wisdom sayings and then immediately attempt to replace negative thoughts and influences with right thinking. Miller quotes another author, Daniel J. Estes, who explains the purpose of the book: “In Proverbs, the juxtaposition of the routine details of daily life with reminders of Yahweh’s evaluation of these activities reveals that all of life is regarded as a seamless fabric.”


Miller does not leave the reader engulfed in a sea of words of enlightenment, but instead builds a bridge between spiritual truth and everyday practical advice.

Many commentaries are so detailed and academic that personal or contemporary application by the preacher or teacher must be developed separately. A refreshing feature of Miller’s work is a recurring section titled, “The Text in the Life of the Church.” And indeed, Miller deals with relevant issues. He addresses the problem of absent or noninvolved fathers and the increasing number of young people living together outside of marriage. He discusses law enforcement and the United Nations. For churches desiring conflict transformation and repellents for harmful gossip, this book is also a resource.

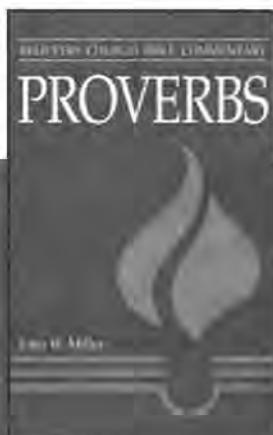
As Proverbs presents boundless moral counsel in its 31 chapters, it is good to have a commentary that brings all of that heavenly counsel down to earth. Yet, Miller is more suggestive than dogmatic in highlighting these issues and concerns.

I was fascinated by the author’s innovation in handling the poetry of Proverbs. He encourages the use of one’s fingers in recalling its many precepts: “Fingers played a role in memorization, it seems, as indicated in a poem in the introductory part of the book, where a father asks his son to bind his words on his fingers and write them on the tablet of his heart.” Guess I never thought of using my fingers as biblical learning tools, and I give the author credit for indulging in such pragmatism.

Modern scholarship questions the presumed authorship of many of the biblical books, and this commentary follows suit by attributing the editing of much of Proverbs’ contents to a group of Levites who lived during the time of Hezekiah, and who expanded upon the words of Solomon. While the arguments for multi-authorship are interesting and well-documented in Miller’s work, the average church member likely has little interest in such discussion. Be prepared for ongoing references to the “Hezekiah Edition” in the table of contents.

What we have here is a practical handbook guiding us through the wise sayings of Proverbs—not too technically, yet not too succinctly—but with the creative scholarship of a Mennonite sage. I am quite pleased to add this edition to my library. 

Tim Schultz has pastored Mennonite churches in New York and New Jersey and is enrolled at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School.



### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *Proverbs*

**Series:** Believers Church Bible Commentary; *Proverbs* is the 19th volume in the series.

**Author:** John W. Miller, professor emeritus at Conrad Grebel University College/University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada

**Publisher:** Herald Press, 2004

**Cost:** \$24.99 (paperback, 352 pages)

**To order:** Call Brethren Press, 800-441-3712.

**ONCAMPUS**



**Bridgewater College** (Bridgewater, Va.)

The late Thomas Robert Thornley Jr.—a member of the Bridgewater music faculty from 1972 to 1997 and chairman of the music department at the time of his retirement—was memorialized in a special Nov. 20 concert in the college's Carter Center featuring the Bridgewater College Symphonic Band.



**Elizabethtown College** (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Elizabethtown's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities for a three-year collaborative research project titled "Amish Diversity and Identity: Transformations in 20th Century America." Donald B. Kraybill, senior fellow at the Young Center, is the principal investigator for the research team.



**Juniata College** (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Former Juniata women's volleyball player Carli Dale, a 2005 graduate from Cochran, Pa., has been selected as the *ESPN The Magazine* College Division Academic All-American of the Year as selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America.



**University of La Verne** (La Verne, Calif.)

President Steve Morgan announced in November that fundraising efforts for the university's Campus Center Project officially reached \$16,555,941, allowing the multi-million-dollar challenge to be reached ahead of schedule. The board of trustees had set a \$16 million goal in February 2004.



**Manchester College** (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester next fall will offer a new degree in fitness and sport management, with concentrations in fitness, recreation and youth sport, and sport management available. The Department of Health and Physical Education is also changing its name, to the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences.



**McPherson College** (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson received formal notice this fall that its status as an accredited college was renewed by The Higher Learning Commission, an agency of the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities. In a letter dated Oct. 21, the HLC confirmed that it had accepted the recommendation of its comprehensive evaluation team to renew the college's accreditation for another 10 years.



Terry Hatfield

**If you build it:** Youth at St. Petersburg (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren looked at the unvegetated courtyard with one lone tree and said, "Let's build a prayer garden!" With the help of a youth leader, they began to sketch their vision of an outdoor sanctuary where people in the church and community could come for solitude, and with the help of a design draftsman in the congregation, Larry Ehret, a detailed plan was made. The result: The Vera Hoffman Memorial Prayer Garden—complete with gazebo, swing, fountain, mural, and benches—was dedicated Nov. 20, sitting only a half block off the busiest four-lane street in the city. A sign on 38th Avenue gives the invitation: "Prayer Garden... Public is Welcome to Come and Pray."

**NYC announces lineup of speakers**

The final line-up of speakers for National Youth Conference 2006 has been announced, with *Sojourners* editor Jim Wallis and "Free the Children" founder Craig Kielburger among those on the schedule.

Wallis will speak on Sunday evening, July 23, following Mennonite comedy team Ted & Lee, who take the stage Sunday morning. Kielburger, who at the age of 12 helped organize a network aimed at eradicating child slavery, will speak Monday evening, July 24. Beatrice Biira, a Heifer International recipient from Uganda whose story is told in the children's book *Beatrice's Goat*, will speak on Tuesday evening, July 25.

Church of the Brethren speakers include Jeff Carter, pastor at Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, on Saturday evening, July 22; peace studies leader and Juniata College professor Andy Murray on Wednesday morning, July 26; Bethany Theological Seminary professor Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm on Wednesday evening; and David Radcliff, director of New Community Project, on Thursday morning, July 27.

Winners of a Youth speech contest will speak on Monday morning. In addition, a Church of the Brethren "Connections" service will highlight the work of the church around the world. The service will use multi-media to help youth see, hear, and feel what the church does both nationally and internationally, according to a release from the NYC coordinators.

NYC, held every four years, will take place July 22-27 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. Coordinators for the event are Cindy Laprade, Beth Rhodes, and Emily Tyler. More details are available online, at [www.nyc2006.org](http://www.nyc2006.org). Registration began Jan. 1 and continues through April 3.

**Bits and pieces**

- The 2006 Church of the Brethren **Young Adult Conference** will be held May 26-28 at Camp Swatara near Bethel, Pa. The theme will be "Transformed," with worship times and community groups again forming the heart of the schedule. "Joyful Noise" hymn sings, "padare" workshops, and an open mic night are also planned. Details are at [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/yac.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/yac.htm). Registration deadline is May 1.
- **A new resource on young adult ministry**, *Thank You for Asking: Conversing with Young Adults about the Future Church*, was published by Herald Press this past fall. Written by Sara Wenger Shenk, it has a cover price of \$14.99. It can be ordered through Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.

## Pontius' Puddle



### Remembering Rosa Parks

I found myself sitting next to Rosa Parks on the rostrum at New Friendship Baptist Church on Chicago's South Side. I think it was 1967. Next to Ms. Parks was US Rep. John Conyers of Detroit and a very young Rev. Jesse Jackson. We were speakers at an SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) Operation Breadbasket worship and rally. I remember thinking I was the token white preacher.

The diminutive woman beside me seemed half my size. As the event dragged on (anyone remember those long rallies?) I broached a conversation with Ms. Parks, asking about her work and life in Detroit. She gently turned

our talk to me, wanting to know about my church and ministry in the black community. She was soft-spoken, meek. Introduced at the podium she spoke a few words of encouragement and returned to her seat to respectful but mild applause. This quiet but strong Lady of the Bus had not yet become an icon in the movement. I felt blessed for this time with her, but it all seemed so natural in those heady, hopeful days.

I wonder what Rosa thought in the weeks before her death about those people, mostly African-American, who waited for buses that never arrived at the New Orleans Convention Center.

**Martin Deppe**  
Chicago, Ill.

### Thank God for diverse gifts

First Church Chicago thanks God for the election of Belita Mitchell, pastor of First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa., as Annual Conference moderator-elect. We are confident that God is able to use Pastor Belita to guide the larger church to discern our calling in God's mission.

We salute Pastor Belita as the first African-American woman elected to this position and commit to her our unstinting support.

We also ask the larger church to see her gifts as a person called by God to lead us. While we recognize and celebrate that she is a "first," we know that her gift to us is not as a "first" but as a person God has sent to us "for such a time as this."

May we embrace her in her prophetic and pastoral ministry.

*(The Chicago First Church of the Brethren approved this letter at its September meeting.)*

**Orlando Redekopp, pastor**  
Chicago, Ill.

### Liberal views are hurting church

What's happening to the Church of the Brethren? The article by Mark Flory Steury in the November 2005 edition of the MESSENGER posed that interesting question. Steury mentioned the fragmentation in the church and the continuing problem of a decline in numbers. The decline in membership was also reported in the July/August issue.

These problems may be connected, and there may be steps that can be taken to resolve them. The politics embraced by the denomination may be partially to blame for both. It has become clear that the leadership in the Church of the Brethren consistently embraces the liberal side of American politics.

I recently visited the Church of the

*The opinions expressed in "Letters" are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.*

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

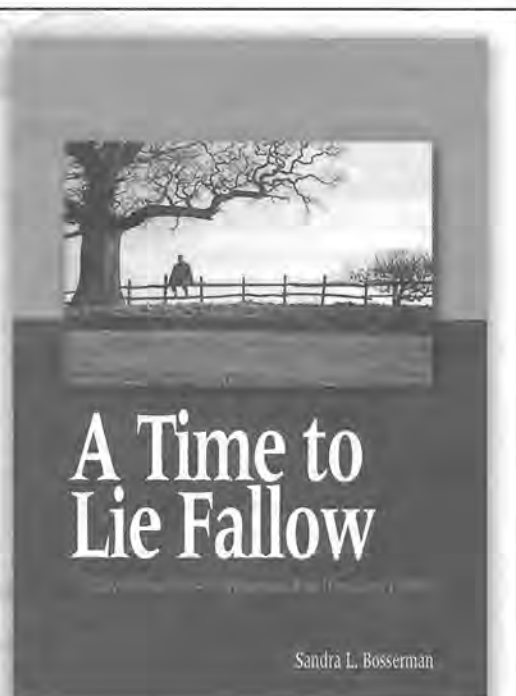
*Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org. Please include hometown and phone number.*

## A Time to Lie Fallow

Using scripture, prayer and reflections, Sandra L. Bosserman encourages us to take time for rest and renewal this Lent. A time to replenish our souls as we await redemption through Christ's resurrection.

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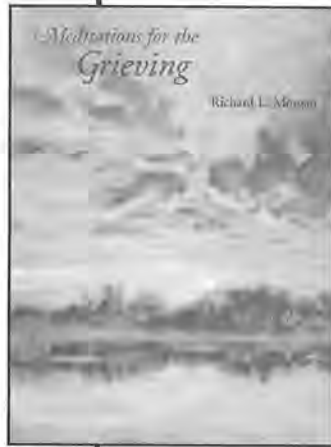


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Brethren website (brethren.org) and made some interesting discoveries. I was only partially surprised to see some of the links that could be found in the On Earth Peace section of the website. In the section devoted to Iraq, there are links to the radical left group MoveOn.org, which was made famous for an ad it featured comparing President Bush with Hitler. MoveOn also boasts of its recent efforts to defeat an initiative in California that would require the parents of minors to be notified before they receive an abortion. You can also link to other sites that vilify the "unlawful and immoral war in Iraq" and the "Israeli military occupation" of the Palestinian territories.

The church leadership has for quite some time embraced such liberal groups and causes. Meanwhile, when was the last time we have seen any efforts by the national Church of the Brethren organization to work against abortion? Why did some delegates at Annual Conference march against the war in Iraq but make no effort on behalf of reducing property taxes to help more Americans afford a home? Why did National Youth Conference offer a trip to protest a nuclear facility to youths such as myself who were too young to understand the complex issues surrounding such technology? How did this protest make the soldiers stationed at the facility feel?

It disturbs me that this is what the public sees when it sees the Church of the Brethren. I am not alone in my frustration on these issues, and this is surely causing fragmentation in the church. It could also be preventing a rebound in our numbers. How can we explain to friends and visitors who do not embrace hard-left causes that this is not what the Brethren stand for? If the content of the website or the actions of

Brethren protesters were my first contact with the Church of the Brethren, I doubt if I would consider attending such a church.

It is my hope that the Church of the Brethren is able to mend its differences and expand our numbers. The first step on this road could be taken through an open and honest discussion about what, if any, political efforts should be made in the name of the Church of the Brethren. Until such time, we risk alienating potential members and disenfranchising conservative and moderate individuals like me who remain uncomfortable with the way we are represented by the denomination.

**Michael Hoshour**  
Bowmansville, Pa.

## Response must include lifestyle

Many place part of the blame for Hurricane Katrina's destructive impact [November 2005, News] on global warming. It is known that as the world's oceans become warmer, storms will become more frequent and more severe.

A recent MIT study shows that hurricane winds today are 50 percent stronger com-

pared to mid-20th century, and there are 25 percent more hurricanes per season. Another study predicts that storms will increase in severity by half a step (Category 4 becomes Category 4.5) by 2075. The resulting "hypercanes" are expected to exact damage equaling or exceeding previous records for disasters (the World Trade Center attack cost \$66 billion; Hurricane Katrina, more than \$200 billion).

Of course, this begins to put the question of an appropriate Christian response to such calamities. Traditionally the church has been quick to provide compassion in the form of relief to refugees and work crews to clean up and rebuild.

This is not compassionate enough, however, when faced with today's unnatural disasters. Christian love requires that people of faith root out the underlying causes of others' suffering. In the case of suffering caused by today's global warming-powered hurricanes—or the 200 million people along the world's coasts who may be uprooted by rising sea levels by the end of the century—this would mean acting to stem the causes of climate change.

This suggests action on two tracks: 1) reducing our own fossil fuel consumption (each of us is responsible for 19 tons per year), and 2) calling on the government to set standards that dramatically reduce emissions of global warming gases (with 4.6 percent of the world's people, the US releases 25 percent of the CO<sub>2</sub>).

Challenging, yes. And it would mean

some changes in our own lifestyles. But since when are these deal-breakers for followers of Christ?

**David Radcliff**  
Elgin, Ill.

## High-fives are still OK

In "Hospitality, Andrew style" [November 2005] by David S. Young, Brother Young's article is most refreshing and welcome. I thank him for his sharing.

A total of 12 years as a vocational rehabilitation counselor in Indiana in Michigan, it seems to me, leaves me with a better-than-average appreciation of all efforts to assist our brothers and sisters with disabilities. I would add two comments to David's remarks. In point 3, it seems he (David) is suggesting "high-fiving" may be juvenile. I personally "high-five" friends of any age.

Secondly, many, if not most, disabled respond in a smiling, friendly manner if so approached.

I commend David and his wife for rearing and supporting their son in a wise, yea Christian, manner! May God richly bless them.

**Wade Bollinger**  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

## Keep Christ in dates

The most common and easily understood expressions for denoting historical dates are BC (meaning "Before Christ," and AD, meaning "Anno Domini" (in the year of the Lord).


## CLASSIFIEDADS

**Worship with us in Northern Virginia.** Do you know of someone living in, moving to, or visiting the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.? The people of the Oakton Church of the Brethren warmly invite everyone to join us Sunday mornings for church school at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Contact the church office at 703-281-4411, e-mail office@oaktonbrethren.org, or visit the church website at www.oaktonbrethren.org for more information.

**The Council on Church and Media** seeks a part-time executive director to bring creative administration to organizational initiatives to fulfill CCM's mission of enhancing connections and providing professional development for communicators from peace church traditions. Primary responsibilities include working with the CCM Executive Committee to develop and implement vision, priorities, and strategy for recruiting and retaining membership; coordinating logistical and program planning and promotion of CCM annual conference; overseeing development and maintenance of CCM website; editing CCM materials; and maintaining CCM annual budget. For more information, contact Tony Krabill at 574-294-2424 or churchandmedia@mennoniteusa.org.

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There is a movement in some circles to change these designations to BCE and CE, meaning "Before the Common Era" and "Common Era," in order to eliminate any references to Jesus Christ, or any connection to the Christian religion.

Here in South Carolina we are reviewing history textbooks for adoption in high schools, and are calling attention to the publishers' occasional use of the uncommon terms BCE and CE instead of the universal

and more easily understood terms BC and AD, in an apparent attempt by the textbook authors to influence rather than inform.

You can imagine my surprise in seeing that MESSENGER is also trying to get away from using the term BC, Before Christ, and is instead using the term BCE., Before the Common Era. An article by Robert Neff in your March issue uses BCE in preference to BC to denote a date before Christ.

You should not be ashamed, and you

should not be afraid, to use the term BC to denote dates, and you should not be a part of the movement to eliminate references to Christianity in our everyday life.

**Walter McSherry**  
Spartanburg, S.C.

**Editor's note:** This is a subject of considerable debate in theological and academic circles. Recognizing these differing views, MESSENGER's current style on this issue is to use the author's preference in giving historical dates. In the April issue, for example, "BC" was used.

## TURNING POINTS

Please send information to be included in Turning Points to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-523-8039 ext. 206; jcllements\_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

### New Members

**Akron, Ind.:** Jonathan Tinke  
**Antelope Park, Lincoln, Neb.:** Hannah Ditmars  
**Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio:** Mary Taynor  
**Big Swatara, Paxton, Harrisburg, Pa.:** Kenneth S. McCollum, Weston S. McCollum  
**Buckeye, Abilene, Kan.:** Carol Plybon, Berniece James, Jim Wick  
**Clover Creek, Martinsburg, Pa.:** Naomi Lynn, Chris Miller, Wanda Pollard, Carl Sell, Ruth Musselman, Silas Musselman, I. June Yingling  
**Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.:** D. J. Swartzentruber, Katelyn Petersheim  
**Heidelberg, Schaefferstown, Pa.:** Rosanna Bucher, Bethany Eberly, Benjamin Martin, Darryl Diamond  
**Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio:** Deb Callahan, Andy Haupricht, Dorothy Haupricht, Larry Laurent, Arizona Laurent, George Sikora, Bonnie Sikora  
**Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.:** Shanna Bodenheimer, Amber Whitaker, Erik Bush  
**Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.:** Tanya Bollinger, Martin Kampen, Kimberly Kampen, Katelyn Kampen, Benjamin Kampen, Darel Seibert, Jenifer Seibert, Joseph Sommers, Bonnie Sommers, Rachael Marie Fry  
**Middlecreek, Rockwood, Pa.:** Elaina Sterner, Kelsey Friedline, Matthew Winkler, Ryan Winkler, Amanda Miller, Patrick Pryal  
**Mohican, West Salem, Ohio:** Steve Noletti, Laura Noletti, Erin Hoff  
**Petersburg Memorial, Petersburg, W.Va.:** Glenn W. Cook, Jr., Virginia M. Cook  
**Ramey Flats, Clintwood, Va.:** Bonnie Ratliff, Harold Ratliff, Tamara Sykes, Loretta Mullins, Rita Cantrell, Roy Cantrell, Sadie Lyall, Zetta Lyall, Palmer

Lyall, Tressie Mullins, Vonda Taylor, Jerodine Mullins, Eric Mullins, Al Branham, Pauline Taylor, Jack Taylor  
**Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa.:** Nathan Holt, Clifford Swope, Stacy Orndorff  
**Roaring Spring, Pa.:** Erin Caldwell, Brian Caldwell, Rachel Lattieri, Travis Wagner, Steve Walter  
**Saint Petersburg, Fla.:** Jeanne Miller  
**Thurmont, Md.:** Jacob Hepner, Kadear Morris, Harold Boone  
**Woodbury, Pa.:** Ruth Disbrow

### Anniversaries

**Dray, James and Cynthia,** Myersville, Md., 50  
**George, Oscar and Nellie, Bolivar,** W.Va., 50  
**Guyton, Wayne and Pat,** Burkittsville, Md., 50  
**Knox, Glenn and Doris,** Uniontown, Pa., 55  
**Means, John and Juanita,** Uniontown, Pa., 50  
**Patterson, Ivan and Clara,** Greenville, Ohio, 55  
**Tinkey, Norman and Rozella,** Akron, Ind., 55  
**Wolfe, William and JoAnn,** Myersville, Md., 50  
**Yordy, Marvin and Peg, Roanoke,** Ill., 55

### Deaths

**Border, Thelma, 92, Live Oak,** Calif., Jan. 1, 2005  
**Bowers, Zella K., 84, Carlisle, Pa.,** June 25  
**Bowman, Jacob Jay, 88,** Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 22  
**Bowman, Ralph D., 86, Reedley,** Calif., Oct. 24  
**Breisacher, Viola Requa, 99,** Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 26  
**Brown, Charles W., Jr., 58,** Hollidaysburg, Pa., Oct. 20  
**Clentimack, Tamah, 85, Lebanon,** Pa., Nov. 2  
**Clouser, Anna Mary, 81,** Thompsonstown, Pa., Oct. 15  
**Cohick, Samuel, 91, Newville, Pa.,** June 26  
**Crist, Catherine Garber, 92,** Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 23  
**Darling, Don, 82, Champaign, Ill.,** Oct. 12  
**Ebersole, Jean, 59, Lebanon, Pa.,** Nov. 7

**Ellis, Elizabeth, 100, Huntingdon,** Pa., Feb. 27  
**Estep, Donna Kline, 73, Fulks** Run, Va., Oct. 12  
**Fasnacht, Joy Cullen, 90, Sebring,** Fla., Oct. 21  
**Fillmore, Linda, 62, Yuba City,** Calif., Sept. 17  
**Flory, Helen Crumppacker Flora,** 98, Montgomery, Ill., Aug. 19  
**Flory, Robert M., 95, Falls** Church, Va., Nov. 10  
**Furry, Lorma Jane, 76,** Huntingdon, Pa., July 11  
**Grugan, Scott, 44, Huntingdon,** Pa., March 3  
**Haller, Helen, 80, Huntingdon,** Pa., Aug. 25  
**Harper, Walter, 80, Thurmont,** Md., Oct. 9  
**Harshbarger, John Carl, Sr., 97,** Weyers Cave, Va., Oct. 21  
**Helmick, Dorsey Gaynor, 87,** Moorefield, W.Va., Oct. 5  
**Jenkins, Thelma E. Hoover, 90,** New Oxford, Pa., Oct. 11  
**Kanode, Hugh Eugene, 75,** Roanoke, Va., Sept. 25  
**Kensingler, Donald B., 76,** Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 28  
**Keplinger, Maynard Franklin, 85,** Maysville, W.Va., Sept. 17  
**Kintner, Lois Beahm, 96,** Winchester, Va., Oct. 30  
**Lewis, Mildred P., 94, Petersburg,** W.Va., June 19  
**Little, Priscilla S., 91,** Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 9  
**Loy, Robert, 52, Chambersburg,** Pa., Sept. 14  
**Martzall, Nathan, 91, Lititz, Pa.,** Feb. 15, 2005  
**Negley, Leon, 56, Mazeppa,** Minn., Oct. 6  
**Neidermyer, Alyssa Joy, 18, Lititz,** Pa., Feb. 10, 2005  
**Noble, Isabel, 78, Mount Morris,** Ill., Oct. 31  
**Oberman, Carolyn, 84,** Kalamazoo, Mich., Nov. 9  
**Peters, Cloyd M., 80, Roanoke,** Va., Aug. 25  
**Ratliff, Harold Edward, 67,** Moorefield, W.Va., Sept. 20  
**Reames, Joyce Arline, 76,** Woodstock, Va., Oct. 7  
**Reynolds, Thomas, Jr., 77,** Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 14  
**Rowe, Marvin O., 81, Stuarts** Draft, Va., Sept. 25  
**Runion, Juanita, 75, Antioch,**

W.Va., Oct. 11  
**Scheer, Nancy, 88, Palmyra, Pa.,** Nov. 6  
**Sensenig, Raymond M., 86, Lititz,** Pa., April 22  
**Shreckhise, James Moore, 87,** Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 6  
**Simmers, Lawrence Rudolph, 82,** Broadway, Va., Oct. 9  
**Simmons, Brenda Sponaugle, 49,** Brandywine, W.Va., Oct. 8  
**Sollenberger, Beulah, 89,** Hollidaysburg, Pa., March 20  
**Stine, Claude, 79, Argenta, Ill.,** Oct. 16  
**Stouder, Charles F., 89, Elkhart,** Ind., Oct. 19  
**Strawderman, Ettie Marie Mongold,** 91, Mathias, W.Va., Oct. 24  
**Talbert, Cora, 70, Fayetteville,** W.Va., Oct. 19  
**Tryon, Carolyn, 71, Champaign,** Ill., Sept. 30  
**Walter, Fred E., 77, Salemville,** Pa., Oct. 18  
**Waters, Clifton N., 91, Roanoke,** Va., Oct. 22  
**Weaver, Catherine, 84, Gettysburg,** Pa., Oct. 31  
**Wenger, Arlie Harper, 86,** Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 20  
**Whitmore, DeWitt Harvey, 85,** Sanford, Fla., Sept. 7  
**Williams, Martha E., 86,** Lancaster, Pa., June 29  
**Witham, Milan, 94, Lima, Ohio,** Nov. 1  
**Yoder, Glee E., 89, Willow Street,** Pa., Oct. 23  
**Yokum, Homer John, 69, Harman,** W.Va., Sept. 22

### Licensings

**Adams, Cathy J., W. Pa. Dist.** (Oakdale, New Bethlehem, Pa.), Oct. 30  
**Beebe, David, S. Ohio Dist.** (Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio), June 26  
**Brandhorst, Richard D., N. Plains** Dist. (South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa), Jan. 9, 2005  
**Flumerfelt, David O., Mid. Pa.** Dist. (Twenty-eighth Street, Altoona, Pa.), Nov. 13  
**Keister, Donita J., S. Pa. Dist.** (Buffalo Valley, Mifflinburg, Pa.), April 17  
**Kuryn, Carolyn M., N. Ohio Dist.** (East Nimishillen, North Canton, Ohio), Oct. 23  
**Long, David A., S. Ohio Dist.**

(Cedar Grove, New Paris, Ohio), May 1  
**Morris, James Cody, Southeastern** Dist. (Melvin Hill, Columbus, N.C.), Oct. 30  
**Oesterling, Richard, N. Plains** Dist. (South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa), Jan. 9, 2005  
**Polega, Kristina M., N. Ind. Dist.** (Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.), Feb. 13  
**Runkle, Keith, N. Ind. Dist.** (Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind.), Feb. 27

### Ordinations

**Knechel, Tracy Ann, S. Ohio Dist.** (Mack Memorial, Dayton, Ohio), May 8  
**Mader, Ruby F., W. Pa. Dist.** (Rummel, Windber, Pa.), Oct. 9  
**Smith, Arthur G., Mich. Dist.** (Midland, Mich.), Oct. 16  
**Zerling, James, Atl. N.E. Dist.** (Lancaster, Pa.), Oct. 30

### Placements

**Adams, Cathy J., pastor, Oakdale,** New Bethlehem, Pa., March 1  
**Alexander, Maria Cristina, youth** pastor, Anderson, Ind., Sept. 15  
**Delk, Brian, pastor to youth min-**istries, Castine, Arcanum, Ohio, Sept. 6  
**Elder, John Frederick, from pas-**tor, Sheldon, Iowa, to pastor, Garden City, Kan., Nov. 1  
**Firestone, Reid A., associate pas-**tor, Mohican, West Salem, Ohio, Nov. 1  
**May, Diane Marie, associate pas-**tor, Westernport, Md., Oct. 23  
**Runkle, Keith, youth pastor,** Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind., Feb. 1, 2005  
**Smith, Arthur G., pastor, Midland,** Mich., Oct. 16  
**Stoltzfus, Joyce A., chaplain,** Hospice of Lancaster County, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 6  
**Vroon, Robert P., from pastor,** Hempfield, East Petersburg, Pa., to pastor, Wilmington, Del., Nov. 1  
**Wolfe, Jeffrey W., associate pastor,** Locust Grove, Mount Storm, W.Va., Oct. 16

# No turning back

**W**hen I visited a friend in Australia some years back, she took great pride in telling me about her country's history, traditions, and culture.

One of the unique things she shared about was Australia's official coat of arms. Its shield is flanked by two animals: an emu and a kangaroo. She asked if I knew why these particular animals were chosen. I didn't, other than guessing that they were Australian icons. It turns out that they have greater symbolic



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

importance. They are, according to my friend, the two animals that are physically unable to move backwards—appropriate representatives for a young, forward-looking nation.

Poised at the beginning of a new calendar year, the church might take heed of the example. For the church to remain relevant and even viable in a world that looks very different than it did 50 years ago, it has to look and move

ahead. It doesn't mean losing sight of the past or forgetting its value—even kangaroos will take a look behind them—but retreating or just standing still isn't an option.

Nor is it enough to plan for the coming year. Institutions, including congregations, are not typically known for being able to shift or change course quickly. If we plan for the present or just ahead of where we are, the world's needs will have passed us by before we can catch up. To share the eternal message of Jesus Christ, we must be fluent in the cultural language of the time.

As hockey star Wayne Gretzky once answered when asked about the key to his success: "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been."

An article in Southwest Airlines' *Spirit* magazine last year focused on one of my favorite pastimes: amusement park rides. It described the work of the engineers and others who develop the rides, always looking for new twists and turns to capture the imagination (and park visitors' dollars).

The work on a project of that scope takes years to complete, so the designers have no choice but to be creative

and forward-thinking. That need was expressed in the article by Scott Trowbridge, vice president of design and creative development for Universal Studios' theme parks.

"We have to constantly assess where we think technology is going to be two to four years down the road to avoid being outdated," he said. "So when we start off, we don't exactly know how to do everything that we ultimately have to do."

In one recent ride, for example, Trowbridge said the digital imagery they would need wasn't even available when the plans were set: "We just had to have faith that in those arenas where things are moving very fast there would be someone who was making it at that level when we needed it."

If amusement park executives can have faith to make bold plans and trust they can be met, Christians—including Brethren—should surely be able to do the same.

There are signs that the denomination is taking up that challenge. The Association of Brethren Caregivers board, concerned by the "inadequacies of our current structure," recently issued a visioning statement with "a pro-active call for transformational change which will define the Church of the Brethren as it transitions

**For the church to remain relevant and even viable in a world that looks very different than it did 50 years ago, it has to look and move ahead. It doesn't mean losing sight of the past or forgetting its value—even kangaroos will take a look behind them—but retreating or just standing still isn't an option.**

into being the church for the present age."

Next month, a process called "Together: Conversations on Being the Church" begins with the hope of eventually gaining "a new and common understanding of who, whose, and what we are" through in-depth discussion, study, and prayer. Western Plains District is kicking off a three-year "covenant" with willing congregations to engage in intentional transformation. Scattered initiatives on the local level elsewhere also hold promise.

Genuine commitment to steps like these, and many more such forward-looking steps, will be needed for the church to thrive. Sometimes we might misstep, but as author Annie Dillard wrote, "There is something deadening about going through life cautiously." It doesn't take a kangaroo to make a leap of faith.—Ed.

**COMING NEXT MONTH:** How do we respond to global hunger and poverty issues?, a look at 1 Chronicles, movie review, regional youth conference plans, and more.

# Where is your education



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# Together

I Timothy 4:6-8

## EXERCISE DAILY IN GOD



Advanced registration online at [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) beginning March, 2006.

# Make plans for Annual Conference

July 1-5, 2006 in Des Moines, Iowa

### ADVANCE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

for non-delegates is available starting in March, on-line at [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) or by using the form included on the Information CD to be sent to every congregation in March.

Conference pre-registration closes May 21, 2006. After that time you may register on-site with an additional fee. See the Information CD or the Annual Conference web page for fee schedule and other Conference information.

### Program Booklet (available in May)

Please send the following:

Copies at \$12.00 each of the 2006 Annual Conference Booklet (spiral binding)

Copies at \$3.00 each of the 2006 Annual Conference Information CD-rom

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Amount remitted \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Delegates sending the delegate authorization card and registration fee automatically receive one program booklet.

Information about Conference programs may be obtained by contacting your pastor or Annual Conference office, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120

### Volunteer Helpers

I am volunteering my help with the Conference tasks I have marked below

Please number them in order of preference.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registration           | <input type="checkbox"/> Grades K-2      | <input type="checkbox"/> Grades 3-5    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usher                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High     | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior High   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ticket Sales           | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Adults    | <input type="checkbox"/> Single Adults |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teller                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Nurse         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unloading/Loading Crew | <input type="checkbox"/> Information     |  |

I plan to arrive at Conference on \_\_\_\_\_  
My age is (circle one): 16-22 23-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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