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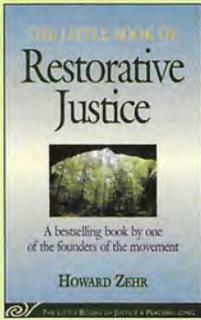
# MESSENGER

MAY 2006 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

## Brethren vs. Mennonites *On parallel tracks through Christendom*



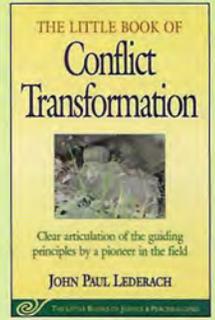
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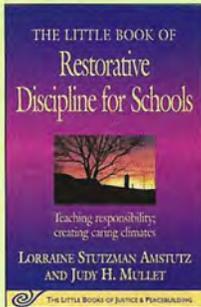
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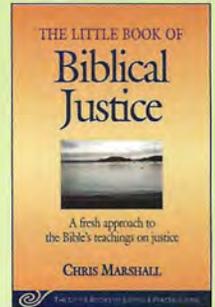


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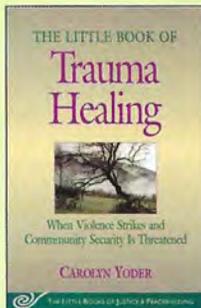
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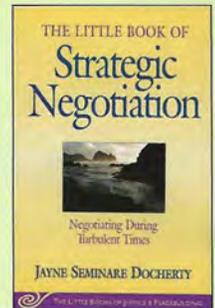
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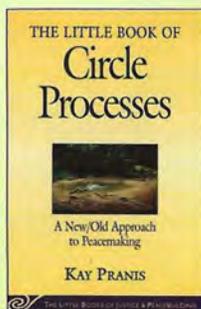
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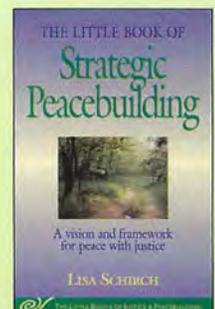
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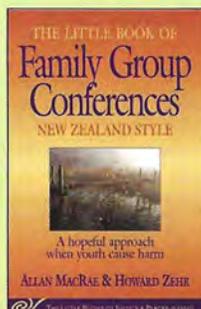
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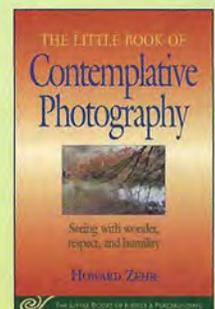


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# MESSENGER

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## ON THE COVER

You've probably said it at least once: Well, we're kind of like the Mennonites. Brethren are indeed kind of like Mennonites, as the two groups trace a common heritage. But there are distinctives between the two traditions, as well. This month's cover package examines what we share, where we differ, and how we work together. You can also test your Mennonite knowledge with a quiz (p. 7).

## DEPARTMENTS

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### 8 **Brethren vs. Mennonites: Family bonds, but not identical twins**

Kathy Reid admits it. She's a flip-flopper. Her life has swung back and forth between the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonites. That's not a bad thing, though, she says. That experience has given her an insight into the differences and similarities between the two groups, and given her an appreciation of both. Wendy McFadden adds a sidebar looking at areas of collaboration between the two denominations.

### 12 **'Pretty good scrappers': Divisions among the Brethren**

Forget about the differences between Brethren and Mennonites. What about all the divisions within the Brethren tradition? More than 40 groups have emerged out of the initial Brethren movement, many of them still existing today.

### 14 **WCC 9th Assembly: God, in your grace, transform the world**

For two weeks in February, people from a host of Christian traditions stretching around the globe gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, for an event that only occurs about once every seven years: the World Council of Churches Assembly. MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek served with the WCC communications team to cover the event and provides a glimpse into the happenings in Porto Alegre.

### 18 **Esther: For such a time as ours**

It's a well-known story, but a rich one. Esther, a Jewish woman, becomes queen. As a heinous plot against her people unfolds, she finds herself in a difficult position—but one through which she may be able to save the Jews. Perhaps she has been called "for such a time as this."

**I**n recent months quite a few bags of clothes have traveled from my house to the local Goodwill store, a migration that clearly has helped the appearance of the basement. It also makes me feel pretty virtuous, especially when I notice that many of the clothes came to us secondhand. I like this form of recycling.

"Recycling" was the business of a man who sat near me on the rental car shuttle bus last week. What did that mean? I asked, thinking first of aluminum cans and plastic bottles. It turned out his company rescues all the goods that are left over from thrift shops such as Goodwill and the Salvation Army. Semi loads of the leftovers are shipped to third-world countries for another chance to be bought.

This man's particular responsibility was books and videos. Anything with an ISBN could be cataloged and sold, he said. Ah, that explains why almost every book on Amazon.com has used copies for sale, even when they're from tiny

publishers like Brethren Press. I always wondered how there could be so many Brethren selling off their libraries. With the reach of the Internet, a single copy discarded in any thrift shop pops up for you to buy tomorrow.

Books that don't sell are shipped, like the used clothing, to third-world countries, the businessman said. Anything that isn't in saleable condition is sold to a paper recycler. "We make money on everything," he explained. It was arresting to hear how confidently he spoke of the economics of used stuff.

I was impressed by the completeness of his company's efforts. I liked the idea that nothing seems to be wasted, that useful goods are united with interested buyers. How admirable to keep as many things as possible from ending up in the landfill.

But something didn't feel quite right. In fact, the realization that this is good business seemed downright disturbing. However carefully we fold and bag our clothing for the less fortunate, what does it mean for us to own so much that we have this much to shed? Does giving it away after we've used it let us off the hook? Are we carting it out just to make room for more?

Somehow it's hard to imagine Jesus worrying about his stuff.

According to Marva Dawn, Americans spend more on trash bags than the gross national products of 90 nations (*Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*, Eerdmans, p. 134).

What would it mean for us to give of our first fruits? In today's ad-saturated world, maybe it's not just about what we give away, but also what we choose not to acquire.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

*Wendy McFadden*

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## AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

**Atlantic Northeast:** The district's two Korean congregations, Good Shepherd and Grace Christian, are in the process of merging to form Grace Christian Church in the Philadelphia area.

**Atlantic Southeast:** Puerto Rico Brethren plan to take a "musical ministry" evangelism tour throughout the island, beginning with a service April 29 in Vega Baja. Young adult Jose Calleja was to preach at the first service.

**Idaho:** Mountain View Church of the Brethren, Boise, is offering a weekly early-morning "Peace Studies from a Christian Viewpoint" class.

**Illinois/Wisconsin:** Pinecrest Community in Mount Morris, Ill., kicked off groundbreaking for a major new addition with a balloon release on April 19. A banquet was held later the same week.

**Michigan:** A district-wide worship service is planned for May 13 at Hope Church of the Brethren in Freeport. It will include singing, special music, and a message by Annual Conference moderator Ron Beachley, followed by lunch and a Conference briefing.

**Mid-Atlantic:** Baltimore First Church of the Brethren hosted an ecumenical/interfaith lecture and worship series on the theme "That They May Be One" in March and April, looking at perspectives from a variety of religions.

**Middle Pennsylvania:** A workshop on "Bridging the Community to Christ" was scheduled for April 29 at Martinsburg Memorial Church of the Brethren, examining congregations' vision and ministry.

**Missouri/Arkansas:** The Nueva Vida congregation meeting in the Carthage (Mo.) Church of the Brethren building held its two-year celebration March 10-12.

**Northern Indiana:** Three pastoral couples from the district traveled to South Africa in February through a Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership Vital Pastors grant, studying conflict resolution. (For more on this program, see page 6.)

**Northern Ohio:** On Earth Peace staff will lead a workshop on "Conflict Transformation for Congregational Leaders" May 10 at Inspiration Hills near Burbank.



Thomas Young

**Virginia:** Fairview Church of the Brethren, located near Rocky Mount, Va., held a groundbreaking service for a 200-seat sanctuary on March 26. The congregation is responding to a need to accommodate current attendance and plan for future growth. Above, members and friends of the congregation pull a plow driven by pastor Robert Williard, who lives 90 miles from the congregation but has served there for 25 years, to break the ground.

**Northern Plains:** Disaster Child Care coordinator Helen Stonesifer and volunteers Jean Myers and Donald and Barbara Weaver participated in a Camp Noah training in Minneapolis in March.

**Oregon/Washington:** General secretary Stan Noffsinger led this year's minister/spouse retreat April 23-25, discussing the current "Together: Conversations on Being the Church" process.

**Pacific Southwest:** The district women's fellowship sponsored a "Weekend of Wonders: Women of Worship" retreat April 21-23 in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif. Dena Pence Frantz led discussion.

**Shenandoah:** Bridgewater College professor Stephen L. Longenecker delivered the first CrossRoads (Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center) lecture for 2006, on "Brethren and Mennonites in the Midst of Other Religions in the Valley," March 25 in Harrisonburg, Va.

**South/Central Indiana:** The Compañeros en Ministerio program is sponsoring a day of music, miniature golf, and a picnic May 20 in Beech Grove, near Indianapolis.

**Southeastern:** An adult fellowship rally took place April 23 at the Peak Creek congregation (Laurel Springs, N.C.), with a carry-in meal and a message from Annual Conference moderator Ron Beachley.

**Southern Ohio:** An "Auction in the Spring" was slated for April 29 at Darke

County Fairgrounds in Greenville, raising money for disaster relief efforts.

**Southern Pennsylvania:** A district-wide "faith dinner" to benefit disaster relief was held April 1 at York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. The Miracles Gospel Quintet provided entertainment.

**Southern Plains:** Thirty-four Brethren met at Big Creek Church of the Brethren, Cushing, Okla., on March 26 for a day of work and fellowship. Work included painting and various repair projects.

**Virginia:** Irving Glover, former pastor of the Mount Bethel congregation, assumed the role of "pastor to pastors" for the district on April 1. He will assist district executive David Shumate in caring for pastors' needs and concerns.

**West Marva:** The district new church development committee has approved Harmony Worship Center in Elkins, W.Va., as a new church plant project. The group purchased property in March.

**Western Pennsylvania:** A youth ministries-sponsored workshop titled "Helping Hurting Kids" was held April 1 at the district office in Somerset, looking at issues affecting teens.

**Western Plains:** Association of Brethren Caregivers executive director Kathy Reid will lead an all-day workshop for deacons May 6 at McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren.

## Peoria remembers heritage with special Sunday service

Women on the left, men on the right—just like a typical Sunday at most Brethren congregations in the early days of the denomination in America. Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren celebrated a little of the church's history with a Feb. 12 heritage service.

Not only did men and women sit on their own sides of the sanctuary; many were dressed in the traditional "plain dress" of the old Brethren. The service featured singing without piano or organ, a preacher's table at the front of the sanctuary, and kneeling for prayer as many Brethren ancestors might have done.

Beginning with a hymn from 1864, "Shall We Gather at the River," the service then opened with prayer. Elder-deacon Brother Ed Kreider read the scripture from Acts 2:42-47, then said to those at the preacher's table, "Now, Brethren, take up the subject." Sister Vicki Matheny "passed the liberty" to pastor Dana McNeil, who preached far less than the two to three hours that might have passed in the 1920s. The service closed with another old hymn and prayer.

After the service, the youth had pre-



Ed and Joann Kreider don "plain dress" for a heritage-themed service at Peoria Church of the Brethren.

pared a meal for the congregation to enjoy in the fellowship hall. They did place a donation bowl at the end of the buffet for contributions to help them all get to National Youth Conference this year.—**Gil Crosby**

## Bosler carries message of forgiveness to Virginia

SueZann Bosler, a well-known advocate against the death penalty, spoke on "The Power of Faith in Forgiveness" at Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Va., Feb. 5.

Bosler shared the story of how she journeyed from anger to forgiveness and worked to spare the life of the man who attacked her and killed her father, Church of the Brethren pastor Billy Bosler, at their home in Miami, Fla., on December 22, 1986.

In Oakton, SueZann Bosler began with a visit to a special joint session with the church's junior and senior high youth. She then brought the message during Sunday morning worship. That afternoon, she was the keynote speaker for

## Illinois Brethren lend aid to village in Honduras

A group of Brethren and a few others from northern Illinois traveled to Honduras Jan. 11-21, partnering with the Christian Solidarity Program of Honduras to do work on a medical clinic in San Juan Batista.

Bill Hare, a member of the Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren and manager of nearby Camp Emmaus, has been leading a workcamp to Honduras each winter for a number of years. Joyce Person, pastor of Polo, was a co-leader this year, and Marcia Quick of Dixon, Ill., served as nurse for the group.

Work included replacing the roof of the medical clinic, which provides vaccination and immunizations for children among its services. Two Hondurans involved in a school-building project the previous year joined the group for the week. At the end of the week, children put on a program of traditional dance, including traditional costumes, to celebrate the successful completion of the project.

The Illinois group also visited the village of Los Ranchos



Brethren shared hugs with new friends in Honduras following a workcamp in January.

one day, where they saw the results of a water project completed after four years. The foundation work had been done by a Church of the Brethren workcamp led by David Radcliff of New Community Project.

John Fyfe and Charlie Smith of Faith United Presbyterian Church in Tinley Park, Ill., which has partnered with Polo in doing a Growing Project for Foods Resource Bank through the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund, joined the group for the trip. Other team members were Denise Check, Lucy Kokal, Buranapong Linwong, Sue McKelvie, Ralph Miner, Richard Person, Ed Olson, Ralph Royer, and Don Snavely.—**Ralph Miner**

the annual School of Christian Growth held each year by the Church of the Brethren congregations in northern Virginia.

Bosler's visit to northern Virginia concluded the next day when she spoke at a local high school about her opposition to the death penalty.—Chris Bowman



Anne Albright

*Iraqi artist Amal Alwan and her family pause for a photo in Iraq shortly before the US-led invasion began in 2003.*

**Kansas-Iraq connection demonstrates art of caring**

When Anne Albright traveled to Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams in 2003, she forged a friendship that has led to an ongoing project.

Albright, a member of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, was in Baghdad when she met a teacher-turned-artist named Amal Alwan. Alwan and her family fled to Syria before the US bombings of Iraq began later that year, eventually returning to find their home devastated, according to an article in the *McPherson Sentinel*.

She and her husband have been unable to find work since then, so Alwan has relied on the sale of her paintings for the family's main income. Albright has been receiving batches of the paintings, then taking them to various events in Kansas to display them and offer them for sale. She then wires the money to Alwan and her family, currently staying in Jordan.

In addition to the *Sentinel* article, a local TV station also did a story on Albright's efforts. That exposure, Albright said, has spurred "a burst of sales." Several others in the US are also selling Alwan's paintings, the *Sentinel* said.

- **Melvin Hill Church of the Brethren**, Columbus, N.C., will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Aug. 13. A series of events will lead up to a worship and celebration time that day.
- **Mount Hermon Church of the Brethren**, located near Bassett, Va., on March 5 celebrated the paying off of all debt on a new addition to the church and some additional property. A celebration took place during morning worship, followed by a covered dish meal.
- **The Church of the Brethren Credit Union** in January passed the \$5 million mark in total assets for the first time in its 68-year history. Member deposits account for \$4.4 million of those assets. The credit union has been seeking to expand since becoming officially sponsored by Brethren Benefit Trust in 2004.
- **Valeria Fike**, a member of York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill., and librarian at the College of DuPage Library in Glen Ellyn, has been named "Paraprofessional of the Year" by *Library Journal*. She is featured on the cover of the spring issue, and a lead article describes her work as supervisor of reference support and College and Career Information Center services. Fike, an ordained minister, holds a master's degree in theology from Bethany Theological Seminary.
- **Clarence Priser** was profiled in the Sparta, N.C., newspaper recently, noting that, at age 99, he was likely the oldest resident of Alleghany County still holding down a regular job. Priser operates a Christian bookstore in downtown Sparta two days a week. Priser, a graduate of Manchester College, is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.
- A press kit created with parts of a documentary titled "**The CPS Story: A Life of Peace in a Time of War**" has won a Gold Davey Award for WVPT, a Harrisonburg, Va.-based educational television station. In this one-hour "Living in Virginia" special, Brethren and Mennonite conscientious objectors in the Shenandoah Valley tell their stories of religious commitment, love of country, public ridicule, and meaningful service.

**REMEMBERED**

- **Charles L. Baldwin**, a former mission worker in Nigeria along with his wife Naomi, died Jan. 30 in Winona Lake, Ind. He was 87.
- **Justus H. Ikenberry**, who turned 100 this past fall, passed away March 7 in Daleville, Va. An early manager of Camp Bethel in Fincastle, he was a member of Trinity Church of the Brethren. A celebration of life service was held March 11.



Jim Stokes-Buckles

**Witnessing in Washington:** A dozen people from Genesis Church of the Brethren in Putney, Vt.—nearly half the congregation's official membership—made the long trek down to Washington, D.C., on Jan. 28 to take part in the "Shine the Light" vigil organized there. The Genesis group made up about half of the people gathered at the vigil site that day, remembering the four members of Christian Peacemaker Teams being held captive in Iraq at the time. "Not only did we help witness for peace in a time of war," said Genesis member Jim Stokes-Buckles, "but we felt that our congregation grew closer and got a reminder of what true discipleship is about."

## Pastoral connections get a blessed boost

**B**eing a pastor is an incredible calling filled with joy and sorrow, heartache and pain, spiritual highs and devastating lows. Pastors have the privilege of being with people during some of the greatest celebrations in life, as well as during some of the most tragic events. It is wonderful, exhilarating, challenging, and humbling.

Even though pastors have the opportunity to be with a lot of people on a regular basis, the pastorate can be a lonely place. Our denomination has been blessed because the Lilly Endowment realizes this. We (through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership) are one of the churches and projects that has received a Lilly grant designed to allow groups of pastors to learn, to be renewed, to travel, and to grow together in the bond of Christian fellowship. The name of the program is Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE).

A year ago, I was invited to be part of an SPE group made up of five people—all Church of the Brethren pas-



VAL KLINE

tered the New Testament church in action. We experienced excitement, faith, true fellowship, and joy in serving Jesus. We were blessed to spend a lot of time with the national directors, Marcos and Suely Inhauser, and with Church of the Brethren representatives Greg and Karin Davidson Laszakovits and their family.

We have also been blessed because people from South/Central Indiana are prayer partners with people in Brazil. Each person has a picture of his or her prayer partner, and we all have pictures displayed in our church buildings as reminders to pray for one another.

Our SPE group has made a commitment to meet each month around our focus question: "How do we create and sustain a mission heart locally and globally?" It has turned out to be an incredible experience. We have devotions together, we laugh together (a lot), we cry together, and we pray together. During our meetings we share a high and a low from our lives, and we have a book review. We read about one book each month and talk about how we can implement some of our learning into our ministries.

One of the things I've learned from our readings is to be in prayer for our mission workers more faithfully. In his book, *A Mind for Missions*, Paul Borthwick wrote, "I have

very seldom heard complaints from missionaries that they get 'too much personal mail.' As a matter of fact, most would long for more personal mail because for many, personal letters are the best way to find out about the churches and communities they have left behind. And, be faithful in

prayer. The most important thing a missionary can hear from us is, 'I have been praying for you every day.' Our prayers are the evidence that we are truly partners in ministry with them." We have mission workers all over the world who would be greatly encouraged by our prayers and letters.

Having had the chance to go to Brazil with a group of Church of the Brethren pastors was the experience of a lifetime. I am thankful to all those who made it possible—for the experiences, wonderful memories, and continued support to keep going and growing in ministry.

Yes, the pastorate can be a lonely place. But, it doesn't have to be. I praise God for the bond of Christian fellowship I now have both in Brazil and right here in South/Central Indiana. 

Val Kline is pastor of Upper Fall Creek Church of the Brethren in Middletown, Ind.

**While we were in Brazil, our group saw what we considered the New Testament church in action. We experienced excitement, faith, true fellowship, and joy in serving Jesus.**

tors from South/Central Indiana District. Some of our responsibilities have included writing a proposal and choosing a place to go—anywhere in the world. We decided to go to Brazil to visit with our Church of the Brethren (Igreja da Irmandade) brothers and sisters. Although we knew some things about the country and the churches, we, for the most part, knew very little (including the fact that Brazilians spell Brazil with an 's'—Brasil). But, we went with open hearts, willing spirits, and lots of laughter.

It was a huge blessing to meet and spend time with brothers and sisters in Brazil. We took some classes, including a crash course in Portuguese, the history of the church in Brazil, and the history of the Church of the Brethren in Brazil. We traveled to each of the churches and places of ministry, including the church in Rio Verde, about a 13-hour, one-way trip.

While we were in Brazil, our group saw what we consid-

## QUOTE WORTHY

**“He was not naive about the dangers he faced; he felt that his work was of utmost importance and was willing to face those dangers with love and courage.”**

—from a statement by Hopewell Centre Quaker Meeting in Virginia, following the death of kidnapped Christian Peacemaker Teams member Tom Fox in Iraq in March

**“We wear the Third World on our skin.”**

—Dietrich Weinbrenner of Clean Clothes Campaign, commenting on the poor working conditions in factories in developing countries where many clothes are produced. He was quoted in a World Council of Churches feature.

**“We need to say what we do in language people understand. To be credible, we need to say in our own language why we go to church. To make myself understood is to make Christianity understandable.”**

—Jantine Heuvelink, from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, on the need of starting at the “grass roots” for Christianity to be relevant in the 21st century

**“We are not united on the essentials. We’re questioning things that Brethren never questioned.”**

—Cerro Gordo (Ill.) pastor Rob Tevis, speaking at Illinois/Wisconsin District conference about disagreement over Brethren core values

**“We deal with a lot of issues, and yet in reality it’s down to people.”**

—Russell Betz, a General Board member from Billings, Okla. He was reflecting on the board’s work during a devotional time at the spring meeting in New Windsor, Md.

**“Some of your levees may have broken down as a result of the storms, but I sense other barriers have broken down here also—barriers that have separated different churches and races from each other. May they never be rebuilt.”**

—evangelist Billy Graham, preaching in New Orleans on March 9 (RNS)

**“There is much to be amazed at.”**

—General Board chair Glenn Mitchell, reviewing a report of ministries and events during the past year

## CULTUREVIEW

• A new survey conducted by the Barna Research Group indicated that **21 percent of Americans consider themselves holy**. The survey also found that 73 percent of Americans believe that a person can become holy, regardless of his or her past, while half of those surveyed said they knew someone whom they considered holy. The study also asked Americans to define holy. The largest category of respondents (21 percent) admitted they didn’t know how to. The highest number that had an idea (19 percent) said “being Christ-like.” (RNS)

• Leaders of the **1.3-million-member United Church of Christ** reported mixed statistical and financial outcomes during the six-month period that followed its General Synod’s controversial

decision to affirm support for same-gender marriage equality. Since July, about 49 churches (less than 1 percent of the UCC’s 5,725 churches) have voted to disaffiliate, according to the denomination’s research office. At the same time, 23 congregations affiliated with the UCC during 2005 and an additional 42 churches expressing a “firm interest” in joining. (UCC News Service)

• A **new DVD on contemplative prayer**, titled “Be Still,” was released in April by Fox Home Entertainment. It features Richard Foster, Max Lucado, Beth Moore, and others. Suggested retail price is \$19.98.



## JUST FOR FUN: TRIVIA

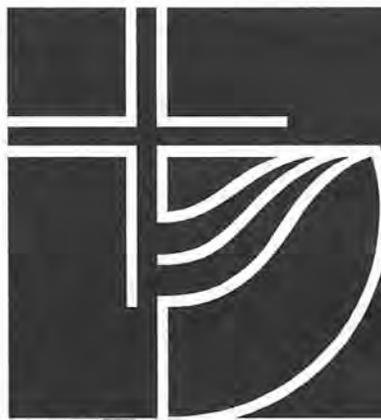
**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR MENNONITES?** Brethren and Mennonites, both Historic Peace Churches with Anabaptist roots, have cooperated together on numerous projects. But how much do you know about our church cousins? Test yourself with the following questions (answers below):

1. Who is credited as the first leader (and namesake) of the Mennonites?
2. Where are the two main offices of Mennonite Church USA?
3. When did Mennonites hold their first baptisms in Europe to set themselves apart from the official church?
4. How many regional conferences are part of Mennonite Church USA?
5. About how many Mennonites (including all related churches) are there worldwide?
6. How many Mennonite-related colleges, universities, and seminaries can be found in the United States?
7. Who is the current executive director of Mennonite Church USA?
8. What Mennonite newspaper is published in the US?
9. Under what nameplate are most Mennonite books published?
10. Name the US state and the Canadian province that have the most Mennonites.

**ANSWERS:** 1. Menno Simons; 2. Elkhart, Ind., and Newton, Kan.; 3. 1525; 4. 21, stretching from coast to coast; 5. More than 1.3 million, in 65 countries; 6. Nine, in California, Indiana, Kansas, Ohio, and Virginia; 7. Jim Schrag; 8. *Mennonite Weekly Review*; 9. Herald Press; 10. Pennsylvania, with about 87,000 members; Ohio is a dis-

tant second. In Canada, it’s Ontario, with about 14,000 members, followed by Manitoba. (Information from [www.mennoniteusa.org](http://www.mennoniteusa.org).)

# Mennonites



vs.

# Brethren

by Kathy Reid

## Observations of a 'flip-flopper'

**Denominations share many family bonds, but they're not identical twins**

**I** have a confession to make. I am an official "flip-flopper." Throughout my life, I have cycled in and out of the Mennonite church and the Church of the Brethren.

I was born into a General Conference Mennonite family from Moundridge, Kan. In fact, nearly every deceased relative of mine who died in this country is buried in the Hopefield or Eden Mennonite Church cemeteries in Kansas—all my grandparents, all my great-grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. I can trace my family history back at least 300 years. I was even born in Philadelphia, Paraguay, while my parents were working for Mennonite Central Committee. All of that makes me "blue blood" Mennonite.

But my father's work took us to a part of Illinois with no General Conference Mennonite churches, so I was raised in the Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren. I attended Manchester College in Indiana, and my husband—who has always been Church of the Brethren—attended Bethany Theological Seminary, where he is the current academic dean.

Then again, while my husband studied at Emory University in Atlanta, our family attended Berea Mennonite Church. While he taught at Pacific School of Religion, we were members of Fremont (Calif.) Church of the Brethren. I was first ordained in the Church of the Brethren, and later in the Mennonite Church when I pastored Austin (Texas) Mennonite Church for nearly 12 years. Now I'm executive

director of the Association of Brethren Caregivers in Elgin, Ill. God has called me to a variety of locations within both denominations. I am definitely a flip-flopper.

Now recently returned to the Church of the Brethren, I have a few humble observations about the similarities and differences between the two religious cultures that have an impact on the way the denominations are structured, work is done, and the future is seen. As I share my observations and experience, I hope you will reconsider your own perceptions. Where do our mutual perceptions converge and diverge?

### Similarities and differences

There are many similarities between the two denominations. The Church of the Brethren has Brethren Volunteer Service, and the Mennonites have Mennonite Voluntary Service. Both denominations have made disaster relief a priority. Both have outstanding colleges and seminaries across this country. The Church of the Brethren has some ambivalence about education, but not as strong as in the Mennonite Church. There is much more "home schooling" in Mennonite families.

Each denomination has a strong history of providing health care. However, the Church of the Brethren no longer owns any hospitals, while Mennonites have more facilities still closely related. Both denominations have excellent retirement communities.

Both denominations started in Europe. The Church of the

Alexander  
Mack



Menno  
Simons



Brethren began in 1708 and migrated to the American colonies between 1719 and 1729. Mennonites started migrating to North America in 1682 and continued to migrate from around the globe, most recently from Eastern Europe.

Both denominations have more and more ethnic churches in the US (mostly Latino). In general, Church of the Brethren people are more culturally assimilated into the American context. Mennonites see themselves as an ethnic cultural group that makes them unique from general American culture. This cultural identification is strong even in Mennonite youth. As a pastor in Texas, I noticed that

Church of the Brethren arrivals would just as soon choose a Presbyterian or United Methodist church as a Mennonite or Brethren church. Mennonite arrivals were pulled strongly to the other Mennonites in the area, even if they had to travel a long distance. The result is that Mennonites have been much more successful at planting new churches in urban areas.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Walking together

While the Brethren and Mennonite publishing houses have published together for years, the joint launch of a new curriculum in February marked the first time the collaboration has extended beyond joint publication.

The launch of the *Gather 'Round* Sunday school curriculum brought together 100 Brethren and Mennonite trainers from the United States and Canada for a weekend of worship, learning, and inspiration. Nametags gave no denominational affiliation.

The combined training event made it possible for trainers in some geographical areas to plan joint workshops. All workshops are open to both Brethren and Mennonites, regardless of who has planned them. A lengthy and growing list of events appears on the *Gather 'Round* website ([www.gatherround.org](http://www.gatherround.org)).

This collaboration is proving to be a way to stretch resources across large distances. It's also enriching the lives of the trainers, who learned by worshiping together that both groups knew and loved the South African song "Hamba Nathi," or "Come Walk with Us."

*Brethren and Mennonites met together in Pittsburgh in February to learn about the new Sunday school curriculum Gather 'Round.*



Merv Keeney

On the church spectrum, both denominations see themselves as “evangelical.” However, the Brethren are offended by being called a sect. They see themselves as more “mainstream” Christians. Mennonites see themselves as “set apart,” and can

*Brethren and Mennonites joined other Historic Peace Church representatives at a planning meeting in Indonesia last fall. The group has been collaborating as part of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence.*

Mennonite. The Church of the Brethren’s early leaders, though, were highly influenced by the Pietist movement. Sometimes Church of the Brethren members are concerned that their Pietist origins are being lost, and can be offended by being lumped in with the “Anabaptists.” Perhaps because there is a Mennonite denomination called “Mennonite Brethren,” Mennonites sometimes seem to think that the Church of the Brethren is just another kind of Mennonite.

The Church of the Brethren’s former nicknames were “Dunkers” or “Dunkards,” and officially it was known as the German Baptist Brethren. The name was changed in 1908 because they were no longer just Germans, nor did they see themselves as Baptist. Their name continues to be controversial,

however, because “Brethren” sounds exclusively male.

For Brethren, the closest ecumenical partners (not counting Mennonites) are the Brethren Church (yes, that is a different denomination!) and the American Baptists (those Pietist roots again). In contrast, while the General Conference Mennonites and The Mennonite Church are now Mennonite Church USA,

## There has been an important history of collaboration and cooperation between the two denominations that share so much heritage and tradition. As a flip-flopper, I enjoy the benefits of both denominations.

be proud of being called a “sect” at times. The Church of the Brethren is involved in the National Council of Churches as a full participant. Mennonites are “official observers.”

Both Mennonites and Brethren see themselves as heirs to the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century. Mennonites tend to use the word “Anabaptist” to mean a “variety” of

# Many points of partnership

Brethren and Mennonites have a continuing history of collaboration

by Wendy McFadden

What is the Church of the Brethren? It’s a question that pops up all the time.

More often than we would like, the answer is an apologetic “Well, we’re a small denomination that’s a little like the Mennonites.”

Wishing to erase that self-deprecating comparison, some Brethren now joke that we await the day when Mennonites describe themselves as being “a little like the Brethren.”

In reality, we do have much in common—enough to find ourselves working together in many areas. While Brethren have been ecumenically minded for many decades and have worked with a wide variety of Christian and interfaith bodies, perhaps we have worked with the Mennonites more than any other tradition. Here are some of the ways our denominational agencies are collaborating. A much longer list could be compiled of local connections.

**Alternative service:** Brethren and Mennonites planned a March 2005 consultation on alternative service that was held in Elgin, Ill., and involved a wide range of Mennonite groups along with Friends, Brethren in Christ, Bruderhof, and Beachy Amish. Initial conversations for the collaboration took place in the Council of Moderators and Secretaries of Anabaptist Churches (COMS), an annual meeting of Mennonites and Brethren. The planners

have continued to prepare together for a possible draft. On the Brethren side, work has been carried forward by General Board staff in Brethren Volunteer Service and the Brethren Witness/Washington Office.

**Peace conferences:** A series of historic peace church conferences began in Bienenburg, Switzerland (2001), and continued with one in Nairobi, Kenya (2004). Plans are being laid for a conference in Indonesia in 2007. Significant leadership has been provided by Bethany Theological Seminary faculty, as well as General Board staff.

**Christian Peacemaker Teams:** This independent organization begun by Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends has connections across the Church of the Brethren, but particularly with On Earth Peace.

**Other peace efforts:** On Earth Peace works with Mennonites in counter-recruitment efforts and creation of the Second Mile peace curriculum. OEP’s Ministry of Reconciliation program cooperates informally with Mennonite Conciliation Service.

**Disaster response:** The General Board’s disaster response program collaborates on occasion with Mennonite Disaster Service, and the two groups communicate routinely so that services aren’t duplicated. Through Mennonite

there are at least 20 other formally organized groups of Mennonites. Each counts as a separate denomination.

The Church of the Brethren is governed by the Annual Conference and organized with districts and congregations. It is strongly congregational. Mennonite Church USA is increasingly a federation of conferences. The power rests with the conference structures.

The Church of the Brethren has declared that they have no creed but the New Testament. Mennonites have a confession of faith. Both denominations look to the Sermon on the Mount as the "canon within a canon." While Mennonites to this day have a hierarchical system (bishops and overseers) in some areas, the Church of the Brethren is humbly proud of calling each other "brother" and "sister."

The Church of the Brethren baptizes adults (usually age 12-16) by immersion (three times forward). Mennonites sprinkle, pour, or immerse (both forward and backward) adults. For Church of the Brethren people, the love feast with feetwashing is the unique Brethren ritual that identifies them. Some congregations still have the expectation that women will wear prayer coverings to love feast, but not necessarily to other worship. Some Mennonites practice feet-

washing, but this ritual is not the identifying marker that it is for the Church of the Brethren.

The Church of the Brethren has a long history of women in ministry, with the example of Sarah Major, an itinerant minister in the 19th century. While women have fewer pastoral ministry opportunities than men in both denominations, women in the Church of the Brethren have more opportunities. Church of the Brethren women have held the



Dan McFadden, left, director of Brethren Volunteer Service, talks with J. Daryl Byler, director of the Washington Office for Mennonite Central Committee US, during an Anabaptist Consultation on Selective Service held last year in Elgin, Ill.

Central Committee, the General Board funded the rebuilding of a school in Iraq.

**Sunday school curriculum:** Building on the foundation of the jointly published *Jubilee* curriculum, Brethren Press and the Mennonite Publishing Network have launched *Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News*, for use beginning this fall (see sidebar). In the past, Brethren and Mennonites have also co-published *Generation Why* for youth and *Good Ground* for adults.

**Believers Church Commentary Series:** The Church of the Brethren has been represented on the editorial committee for this reference series published by Herald Press. A number of the titles are written by Brethren scholars.

**Mission collaboration:** The General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office has worked closely with Mennonites in Sudan and has had points of collaboration in Nigeria and Latin America. The office worked with Mennonites in the placement of Grace Mishler in Vietnam.

**Mission conference:** Mission staff drew heavily upon Mennonite speakers for the Mission Alive 2005 conference as a way to gain fresh perspectives and also root the conference in the Anabaptist tradition. As a result, a num-

ber of Mennonites attended the conference.

**Evangelism:** General Board staff and others participate in New Life Ministries, an evangelism effort of Brethren and Mennonites.

**STAR training:** The general secretary has served on the advisory committee for Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Recovery (STAR), a program of Eastern Mennonite University and Church World Service. This program, or one like it, will likely become part of orientation for individuals going to Sudan through Global Mission Partnerships.

**Media project:** Brethren Press has been drawn in as a partner with Mennonite Media Ministries on a video project about PAX volunteers serving through Mennonite Central Committee following World War II. A grant secured by Brethren Press is helping fund the project, which will focus primarily on Mennonite volunteers but will include references to Brethren involvement in the program.

**Brethren homes:** On behalf of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes, the Association of Brethren Caregivers collaborates with MHS Alliance to provide a variety of insurance and financial resources to retirement communities.

**Volunteer service:** Staff from Brethren Volunteer Service and Mennonite Voluntary

Service meet together through the ecumenical Council of Religious Volunteer Agencies.

**Insurance:** Brethren Benefit Trust partners with Mennonite Mutual Aid to provide insurance to Church of the Brethren agencies. MMA insures claims that exceed BBT's threshold, assists with some of the administration of the plan, and maintains the relationship with the network provider. MMA also manages health savings accounts and several Medicare Part D prescription drug plans for Brethren Medical Plan members.

**Seminary courses:** Bethany Theological Seminary has jointly sponsored courses with Eastern Mennonite Seminary at the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center.

**Preaching resource:** A forthcoming Herald Press book on Anabaptist preaching includes contributions from a Bethany faculty member.

**Hymnal:** The current hymnal was the fruit of nine years of labor by the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonites. In the 14 years since its publication, more than 190,000 copies of the various editions of *Hymnal: A Worship Book* have been sold across the partner denominations.

Wendy McFadden is executive director and publisher of Brethren Press.

top positions in the denomination: general secretary, moderator, chair of agency boards, and other agency executives. While women have had some leadership roles in the Mennonite denominations, few women have been heads of denominational agencies or in the position of executive secretary.

Mennonites believe that they are stronger on the peace position. That may be statistically true. A higher percentage of Brethren young people join the military. Both denominations engage in the public policy debate through a Washington Office.

Historically, the Church of the Brethren believed in “no force in religion,” meaning that a person should not be forced to join a state religion. However, modern Church of the Brethren members have often interpreted “no force in religion” to mean that a person should not be “forced” to conformity on theological and faith issues. Of course, Brethren have always believed in “informal” shunning, if not official shunning. Mennonites still practice excommunication for individuals and congregations. So far, the Church of the Brethren has not removed any congregations from its membership around the issue of homosexuality. Mennonites have removed congregations from conference membership for this reason.

Mennonites have Mennonite Central Committee, which is clearly identified with the various Mennonite denominations as the outreach organization of the church. The Church of the Brethren is very good at starting wonderful outreach programs and giving them to the larger ecumenical world. Eventually these programs lose their “Brethren” label. Two examples are Heifer International and A Greater Gift (SERRV).

Both denominations are able to laugh at themselves. The Church of the Brethren has the “Gospel Messenger,” an online spoof. Mennonites have the Mennonite Starter Kit.

Sadly, both denominations are declining in numbers. The Church of the Brethren has been nearly obsessed with this trend. Brethren worry that in 20 years there will not be a Church of the Brethren. In contrast, Mennonites figure that if they survived the 16th century, they can survive anything.

### Journeying together

There has been an important history of collaboration and cooperation between the two denominations that share so much heritage and tradition. As a flip-flopper, I enjoy the benefits of both denominations. I can recognize that Brethren sing “Praise God Above” (No. 118 in the *Hymnal*) generally too slowly, and that Mennonites often think of Church of the Brethren people as though they are just another kind of Mennonite.

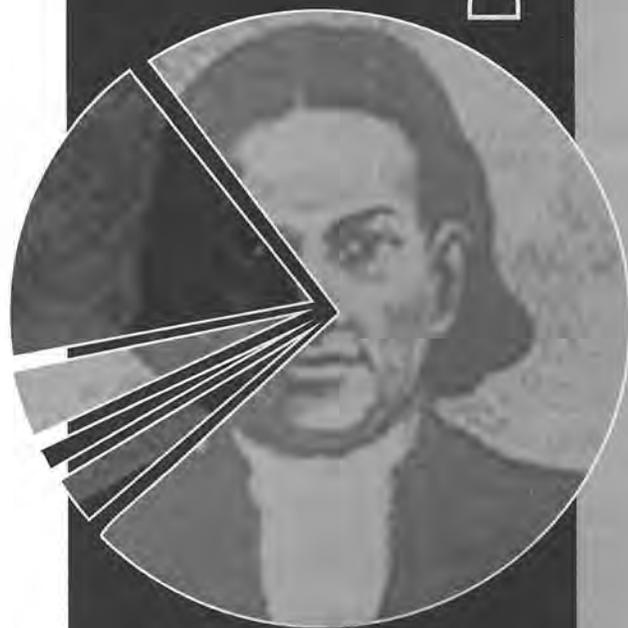
Both denominations have blessings and challenges. Our shared theological perspectives and faith remind me of family members who have grown up with similar values, yet interpret things slightly differently. Perhaps that is the beauty of continued relationship: We can learn from each other, and each has something to share with the other. Mennonites and Brethren can encourage and inform each other.

I’ve discovered that there are many flip-flopers between the two denominations, and that can’t be a bad thing. As followers of Jesus Christ, we bear witness to the world of a unique faith that brings Jesus’ call to this age. 

Kathy Reid is executive director of the Association of Brethren Caregivers. She splits her time between Elgin, Ill., and Richmond, Ind. She is a member of Lower Miami Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio.

# ‘Pretty good scrappers’:

Divisions among the Brethren



## BY THE NUMBERS

Largest Brethren groups in the US:

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Church of the Brethren</b>      | 130,000 |
| <b>Grace Brethren</b>              | 32,000  |
| <b>Brethren Church</b>             | 10,500  |
| <b>Old German Baptist Brethren</b> | 6,800   |
| <b>Conservative Grace Brethren</b> | 2,400   |
| <b>Dunkard Brethren</b>            | 1,000   |

# More than 40 groups have formed out of the original Brethren movement

by Kenneth M. Shaffer Jr.

**Y**ou are pretty good scrappers for a peace people." This was once remarked by a general in the United States Army to a group of Brethren who were seeking recognition for conscientious objectors during World War I. The remark came after the general was told how many divisions there had been among the Brethren.

There have indeed been numerous divisions among the Brethren since 1708 in Schwarzenau. *The Brethren Encyclopedia* lists 36 divisions as of 1980. Since then there have been at least five additional divisions according to the "Chart of Brethren Bodies" published by the Brethren Heritage Center in 2005. Some of these groups still exist, some have reunited with the groups from which they separated, some have united with other groups, and some have ceased to exist.

The earliest group to separate from the Brethren was the German Seventh-Day Baptists. They were followers of Conrad Beissel, who had been baptized by the Brethren and placed in charge of a congregation. Beissel broke with the Brethren in 1728 and a few years later founded the Ephrata Community. In addition to traditional Brethren beliefs and practices, Beissel emphasized celibacy, communal living, and Saturday as the Sabbath. While the Ephrata Community no longer exists, there are still a few German Seventh-Day Baptists members.

Two major divisions occurred in the early 1880s. In 1881 the most conservative group withdrew from the Church of the Brethren (then known as the German Baptist Brethren) to form the Old German Baptist Brethren (sometimes called the Old Order Brethren). Then, in 1883, a progressive group formed the Brethren Church (sometimes called the Ashland Brethren) when their leader, Henry Holsinger was expelled by the 1882 Annual Meeting.

Behind these divisions were fundamental disagreements over how to adapt to change. The Old German Baptist Brethren felt the Brethren should change as little as possible. They were opposed to such innovations as Sunday schools, salaried ministers, higher education, prayer meetings, and mission boards. The Brethren Church felt that the Brethren were not adapting fast enough to the changing world. They advocated Sunday schools, the salaried ministry, higher education for ministers, foreign missions, and relaxation of the dress code. The Old Orders wanted Annual Meeting decisions to be binding, while the Brethren Church challenged the authority of Annual Meeting.

The Dunkard Brethren withdrew from the Church of the Brethren in 1926. Overall, this division was about the nature of the church. The Dunkard Brethren felt that the Church of the Brethren understood the purpose of the church as service to the world, while the Dunkard Brethren felt the church's purpose was to set a standard for the world. From the Dunkard Brethren perspective, service to the world leads to compromise with the world. Such compromise had caused the church to abandon plain dress, accept divorce, prefer salaried ministers with higher education, and provide special programming for

youth, which isolates youth from the older generation.

Not only did groups separate from the Church of the Brethren, but groups separated from groups which had themselves separated from the Church of the Brethren. In 1939 the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches separated from the Brethren Church. Grace Brethren felt that the Brethren Church had become too liberal, especially in regard to the Bible, which the Grace Brethren understood as infallible. Grace Brethren are opposed to evolution, feminism, abortion, and rights for homosexuals. They place heavy emphasis on evangelism, church growth, and foreign missions.

The Grace Brethren experienced a division in 1992 when a group of congregations separated from the fellowship and took the name Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International Fellowship. This new group objected to the liberal tendencies among the Grace Brethren and wanted more local church independence. They pattern their organization on the New Testament and do not have any incorporated agencies or boards. Pastors are trained through a Theological

**Behind these divisions were fundamental disagreements over how to adapt to change. The Old German Baptist Brethren felt the Brethren should change as little as possible. ... The Brethren Church felt that the Brethren were not adapting fast enough to the changing world.**

Practorium, rather than in Bible schools or seminaries.

Of course, since there have been more than 40 divisions among the Brethren, many groups are not named above. A few of these other groups are: Hostetler Brethren (1820), Church of God [New Dunkers] (1848), Leedy Brethren (1858), Old Brethren (1913), Conservative German Baptist Brethren (1931), Primitive Dunkard Brethren (1946), New Testament Brethren (1948), Fundamental Brethren Church (1962), Bible Brethren Fellowship (1979), and German Baptist Brethren (1999). The most traditional Brethren group is the Old Brethren German Baptist Church, which was organized in 1939. This small group adheres to all the historic Brethren beliefs and practices and rejects the use of cars, telephones, insurance, and electricity. They are sometimes referred to by the nickname "the Horse and Buggy Brethren."

The largest of the Brethren groups in the United States is the Church of the Brethren, with approximately 130,000 members. The next five largest groups are: Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches with approximately 32,000; Brethren Church with approximately 10,500; Old German Baptist Brethren with approximately 6,800; Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International Fellowship with approximately 2,400; and Dunkard Brethren with approximately 1,000. ■

Kenneth M. Shaffer Jr. is director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives in Elgin, Ill. He is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

# GOD, IN YOUR TRANSFORM

Business, worship, and more fill  
WCC's 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre

“**G**od, in your grace, transform the world.” These words—the theme for the World Council of Churches (WCC) 9th Assembly—rang out over and over again in a host of languages and rhythms over the course of two weeks in February.

At first glance, the WCC Assembly might seem an unlikely place for transformation. It is at its heart, after all, a giant church business meeting. Picture Annual Conference three times the length, occurring in half a dozen languages with people from, literally, every corner of the globe.

The process can often be dizzying, with a series of committees, hearings, protocols, and formalities. The predictable

politics occur, and some unpredictable politics. Long lines amass at the microphones to address fine points of each item that comes to the floor.

Far beyond the theological differences that can occur within one denomination, here one finds a wide array of Protestant traditions and Orthodox, differing cultural understandings of issues, highly liturgical churches and simple ones. The body cannot even take communion together, because some traditions don't permit their eucharist to be open to non-members.

How does transformation occur amid all this? It can occur because those gathered there—despite their differences, their many amendments, and their human foibles—remember

World Council of Churches



# GRACE, by Walt Wiltschek THE WORLD



what binds them together in the quest for visible unity: They are all followers of Jesus Christ, who came to transform the world. In twice-daily worship services, in prayers during business sessions, in Bible studies, in informal encounters, and elsewhere, that common denominator still prevails.

In brief overview, here are some of the highlights of that Assembly as it met Feb. 14-23 (with pre-Assembly events Feb. 11-13) in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

## Business

The real headline of business at this Assembly may have been the process, rather than the business itself. The WCC officially adopted consensus as its model for decision-making, changing the conduct of business to a place where every voice is assured of being heard. Dr. Jill Tabart of Australia said consensus is “When all agree, or when most agree and the others feel their view has been heard.”

Delegates used blue and orange cards to signal feeling “cool” or “warm,” respectively, to an item or issue being discussed. If blue cards showed when the moderator tested the body for final action, the person holding the blue card was directed to go to a microphone and state their concern. If their concern could not be accommodated in the item at hand, the delegate could then either agree to “stand aside” or to go to a designated point to have their dissent recorded.

Business items often came for several hearing sessions before being finally acted on, allowing time for input that could then be incorporated into the document. The last few days of business moved at a frenzied pace, but every item on the agenda was addressed without extra sessions.

One major new paper adopted was “Called to Be the One Church,” which urges the WCC and member churches to “give priority to the questions of unity, catholicity, baptism and prayer.” Calls for continued collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches were affirmed.

Several leaders emphasized fiscal responsibility and a limited scope for core ministries as the WCC moves forward,

## ASSEMBLY FAST FACTS

**WHAT:** WCC 9th Assembly. The WCC holds an international assembly approximately every seven years.

**THEME:** “God, in your grace, transform the world”

**WHEN:** The 9th Assembly was held Feb. 14-23, with pre-Assembly events Feb. 11-13.

**WHERE:** Porto Alegre, capital of Rio Grande do Sul state in far southern Brazil

**WHO:** More than 4,000 participants—including nearly 700 delegates—registered for the Assembly. The Church of the Brethren had one delegate, Jeff Carter of Manassas, Va. General secretary Stan Noffsinger attended as advisor to the delegation, and several other US Brethren attended as observers. Filibus Gwama attended as delegate for Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria); Gwama is president of EYN.

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES:** Five. All WCC documents and press releases at the Assembly went out in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and French. Simultaneous translation occurred in all these languages and Indonesian for all business/plenary sessions and some other events.

**PRESS:** About 150 accredited journalists covered the event for religious and secular media.

**FIRSTS:** This was the first WCC Assembly to be held in Latin America.

**LEADERSHIP:** Catholicos Aram I finished two terms as WCC moderator at this Assembly. Delegates elected Brazilian the Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann as the new moderator. The Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson of the United Church of Christ continues as WCC president for North America. The Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia serves as WCC general secretary.

especially in light of a significant decrease in funding. The organization was urged to “claim a clearer and stronger public profile in its witness to the world.”

“The WCC should do less, do it well, in an integrated, collaborative and interactive approach,” said the Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil), moderator of the program guidelines committee. Four main program areas were set: unity, spirituality and mission; ecumenical formation, particularly focusing on youth and young adults; global justice; and bringing a credible voice and prophetic witness to the world.

*Nobel laureates Adolfo Esquivel, left, and Desmond Tutu, second from left, led a march for peace during the WCC 9th Assembly.*

Delegates also adopted a number of “public issues” statements, speaking to issues of current international concern. Those statements addressed the protection of vulnerable populations; terrorism, counter-terrorism, and human rights; nuclear disarmament; the Latin American region; water for life; and the reform of the UN. Responding to widespread violence related to cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed, the Assembly voiced its concern for mutual respect, responsibility, and dialogue with people of other

**“In the face of all the poor—the hungry, estranged, and refugees, we are obliged to discern the face of Jesus”**—Orthodox Archbishop Anastasios of Albania at the opening service

faiths. The body also expressed concern about the violent situation in northern Uganda, raised by former United Nations under-secretary general Olara Otunnu.

After much debate and deliberation, 150 people were called to form the new WCC central committee, which is the main decision-making body between assemblies. The central committee includes 63 women and 22 young adults—figures that were below stated goals but at or above previous levels. Altmann, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, was called as moderator.

Guest speakers in plenary sessions included Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Brazil’s president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

### **Worship**

Many who have been to past Assemblies say that worship was the highlight of the event, and with good reason. Assembly worship is a confluence of styles and languages, rich with diversity, and reverberating with praise to God.

In Porto Alegre, worship took place under a brightly colored, striped “Big Top” circus tent, providing cover for thou-

sands of people to worship together. Major opening and closing services bracketed the Assembly, and shorter worship times took place under the tent twice a day between them.

Orthodox Archbishop Anastasios of Albania spoke at the opening service, lifting up poverty and violence as key areas in which Christians should work at transforming the world.

“In the face of all the poor—the hungry, estranged, and refugees, we are obliged to discern the face of Jesus,” he said. “Let us make a firm decision to struggle, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to overcome violence wherever we possibly can: in our family and society, as well as in the political and international community.”

The Rev. Robina Marie Winbush of the Presbyterian Church (USA) delivered the sermon for the closing service, focusing on healing. She used river imagery

from the scriptures and from a poem by Langston Hughes to speak of God’s nourishing river of life. The trees growing alongside that river, she said, produce “healing leaves.” She cited examples of healing brought about by individuals around the world.

Ultimately, she added, transformation occurs through God. “Would you consider with me,” she asked, “the possibility that God has been whispering to our spirits throughout this Assembly, ‘I am transforming the world?’”

All of the services included a rich mixture of music—much of it with Latin American rhythms—as well as scripture, symbolic visual presentations, and prayers.

### **Brethren/Historic Peace Churches presence**

Church of the Brethren delegate Jeff Carter and advisor Stan Noffsinger enjoyed prime seating at the Assembly. The Brethren delegation was seated in the front row, center stage in the plenary hall. Filibus Gwama, the delegate from Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) was seated with the US delegation.

All three participated in a “mutirão” workshop on the

## **US REPRESENTATIVES ASK FORGIVENESS**

Representatives of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches (WCC) addressed a message to the WCC’s 9th Assembly saying that the US-led Iraq war was a “mistake,” and apologized to the ecumenical community for failing to raise a prophetic voice to prevent it.

“We lament with special anguish the war in Iraq, launched with deception and violating global norms of justice and human rights,” said the statement, which was phrased in the form of a prayer of repentance.

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, moderator of the US Conference for the WCC—made up of 34 US churches that are members of the Council—read the message to an Assembly plenary. Speaking at an earlier press conference, Kishkovsky said the delegation was making the statement to the ecumenical community to “show repentance and solidarity with those who suffered.”

In addition to Iraq, the statement addresses US complicity in global issues such as environmental damage, global warming, starvation, HIV/AIDS, and economic justice.

Explaining the timing of the statement, the Rev. John Thomas, president of the United Church of Christ, said, “An emerging theme in conversation with our partners around the world is that the US is being perceived as a dangerous nation.” He said that the Assembly was “a unique opportunity to make this statement to all our colleagues” in the ecumenical movement.

The group emphasized that it was not an official statement of any denomination, but only of the board members of the WCC’s US Conference. Thomas acknowledged that not all church members would agree with the thrust of the statement, but said it was their responsibility as leaders to “speak a prophetic and pastoral word as we believe God is offering it to us.”



*WCC general secretary the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia speaks at a pre-Assembly youth meeting.*

“God is a mighty God, but this God needs you,” Tutu told the crowd. “When someone is hungry, bread doesn’t come down from heaven. When God wants to feed the hungry, you and I must feed the hungry. And now God wants peace in the world.”

### **Young adult involvement**

WCC leaders said before the Assembly that they wanted it to be one that lifted up and made possible the contributions of young adults.

All young adults attending (defined by the WCC as those age 30 and under) were invited to be part of the 22 “ecumenical conversations” on various issues held during the Assembly, and young adult delegates were part of all Assembly committee work. About 700 young adults took part in the Assembly, including about 100 as delegates and 150 as stewards who assist the Assembly’s work.

Some discontent arose among the young adults attending when the initial ballot brought for central committee composition had only 15 percent youth representation, far short of

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

According to a recent World Council of Churches report, WCC member churches now span more than 520,000 parishes and local congregations in 150 countries, are served by upwards of 490,000 clergy, and encompass as many as 590 million faithful worldwide. The statistics are included in the new *A Handbook of Churches and Councils: Profiles of Ecumenical Relationships*, which provides the first comprehensive overview of the state of the world’s ecumenical organizations, the main global Christian bodies, and their member churches. The WCC has 348 member churches, including the Church of the Brethren.

a 25 percent goal stated by Assembly leaders.

“Young people are crying out to participate in the Council,” Brazilian youth delegate Tiago Albrecht said.

Officers assured the young adults that the WCC did want to hear their voice, however. Delegates called for continued steps to strengthen active involvement of young adults in the WCC’s work and endorsed a proposal to create a special body that will represent and coordinate young adults in WCC decision-making and leadership. In a separate report, the Assembly stated the need for “promoting ecumenical leadership development of youth” with “full participation of youth in all programs of the WCC.” 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He served as seconded staff to the World Council of Churches news team in Porto Alegre to provide reporting on the Assembly. Portions of this article were adapted from World Council of Churches 9th Assembly press releases.

Historic Peace Church’ contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence. The *mutirão* sessions, from the Portuguese word for “coming together,” provided a place for nondelegates to learn about some of the issues related to the WCC’s work and local culture.

Historic Peace Churches representatives met twice during the week, updating each other on their work and finding ways to give a combined voice to issues of concern, such as the public issues statements on the use of force in protecting vulnerable populations and on terrorism. Three Historic Peace Churches delegates were elected to the WCC central committee.

Other Brethren attending the Assembly included Annual Conference moderator Ron Beachley and his wife, Linda, former Bethany Theological Seminary faculty member Dale Brown, and Global Mission Partnerships executive director Merv Keeney.

Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, was on a press conference panel involving the US Conference of the World Council of Churches. The group presented a statement of confession for the US involvement in recent activities of violence and injustice (see sidebar).

Many of the Brethren attending visited Brethren churches in Brazil following the Assembly.

### **Decade to Overcome Violence**

Assembly participants marked the midpoint of the WCC’s Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), and recommitted the organization to working toward the DOV’s goals. Acting on a recommendation by German Mennonite delegate Fernando Enns, the body also affirmed having the WCC plan an international ecumenical peace convocation to mark the end of the Decade.

The DOV focuses on networking nonviolence efforts of member churches and other organizations, aiming to create synergy and momentum for peace. Dr. Janice Love, moderator of the international reference group for the DOV, said the movement seeks to shift from having “sterile debates” on when violence is permissible to highlighting proactive ways in which Christians are engaged in peace and reconciliation work.

A candlelight vigil for peace was held in central Porto Alegre one evening to mark the start of a Latin America focus for the DOV this year. Nobel Peace Prize winners Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Desmond Tutu led the march, followed by a “river of light” formed by the candles of thousands of Assembly participants and local marchers.

# Esther: For such a time as ours

by Eugene F. Roop

*Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal position for just such a time as this (Esther 4:14).*

Those familiar words appear in sermons and even in secular literature (usually without the phrase “to royal position”). Many listeners and, one suspects, even some speakers do not remember the story that gave birth to that well known phrase. The narrative itself overflows with political intrigue, secret conspiracies, and ironic twists of fortune, as well as with banquets and holidays—a contemporary story in ancient dress!

## Rebellion at the state dinner

The story begins with a banquet—three of them, in fact (1:1-9). King Ahasuerus gave a state dinner for all government officials and followed it with a party for “all the people.” At the same time his wife, Queen Vashti, threw a banquet for the women of the palace.

In the midst of one of his banquets, the king sent the royal servants to bring the queen. He wanted everyone to see her beauty. Queen Vashti refused to come! The narrator does not tell us why, but she steadfastly refused.



Vashti’s disobedience enraged the king. Apparently uncertain about the implications of the queen’s action, King Ahasuerus consulted his advisors. They agreed: The queen should be deposed, lest other women follow the example of this royal rebel (1:17). Queen Vashti was out. In addition, the king sent a royal communiqué directing all men to “be master of his own house.”

## From conflict to crisis

After a long search process, one that resembled a TV reality show, King Ahasuerus chose a new queen: Esther, a woman of rare beauty and obedient disposition. Indeed, obedient to Mordecai, her guardian and one of the king’s most faithful officials, Esther hid her Jewish identity to win the royal crown.

Soon after Esther became queen,



**Esther directs the course of events with a political skill no one could have anticipated. In a series of carefully orchestrated moves—all involving banquets—Queen Esther set out to destroy the one intent on destroying her people.**

Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. Mordecai sent a report of this conspiracy through the queen to King Ahasuerus. The conspirators were executed. Immediately thereafter, in an act that defies explanation, King Ahasuerus appointed as chief of staff not Mordecai but his bitter rival, Haman.

Haman wasted no time in seeking to destroy Mordecai. Enraged when Mordecai refused to display proper deference to him, Haman went straight to Ahasuerus. Haman carefully laid before the king a case of sedition. According to Haman, this subversive activity involved not just Mordecai, but the entire Jewish population. Receiving this report from his most trusted advisor, the king authorized Haman to do as he thought best. Seizing the opportunity, Haman issued a communiqué directing the annihilation of the Jews (3:13).

Aware that Haman had enticed the king to his side, Mordecai sought to leverage his relationship to the queen. It is at this point that Mordecai urges Queen Esther to act with the phrase: “Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal position for just such a time as this” (4:14).

**Count well the cost**

Nothing has signaled that Esther, this beautiful, compliant woman, could take the initiative. This time, compliance to Mordecai’s request could result in the queen’s death. On the other hand, inaction could result in genocide. Counting the cost, Esther takes control of the crisis, pushing Mordecai to the sidelines.

Esther directs the course of events with a political skill no one could have antici-

pated. In a series of carefully orchestrated moves—all involving banquets—Queen Esther set out to destroy the one intent on destroying her people (ch. 5).

She succeeded in maneuvering Haman into a situation that the king interpreted as assault against his queen. Realizing all is lost, Haman, on his knees beside the reclining Esther, pleads for his life. However, upon re-entering the room, an infuriated Ahasuerus concluded that Haman intended to rape Esther, and he ordered Haman’s immediate execution (7:1).

**Concluding justice**

With Haman no longer a threat, Esther went to the king concerning the decree that directed the annihilation of the Jews. In this story, though, once a royal edict is declared it is “set in stone.” It cannot be withdrawn. Instead, the king authorized Mordecai, now his chief of staff, to take whatever counter-measures deemed necessary. Mordecai drafted another communiqué, a “self-defense decree,” allowing the Jews to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them (8:11).

**Rage of revenge**

The story concludes with stylistic video game violence: The victims destroy those

seeking to destroy them. That in itself reminds us of how easily violence begets violence, how the rage of the victims ensues into uncontrolled revenge. Once unleashed, nuclear arms, biological weapons, and toxic chemicals become weapons with no boundaries, igniting violence with no controls.

The story ends as it began, with a festival—a banquet. Purim, a mid-March Jewish holiday, was designed not for endless eating and drinking, but perpetual remembrance. In Purim’s comic-like atmosphere, the narrative’s characters symbolize all evil oppressors and storied liberators, past, present, and future. In the midst of this festival, the participants remember and relive the terror of genocide and the drama of deliverance.

We live in a world of intrigue, terrorism, and genocide. The names have changed, but the story continues. The gospel story has the same features, but ends not in revenge, but sacrifice and resurrection. It remains our challenge to continue the work of Jesus in Esther’s world. **LU**

Eugene F. Roop is president of Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

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 June: Job, by Robert Neff.

**ESTHER: A CLOSER LOOK**

**When written:** The book is believed to have been written in the mid-400s BC, after the death of King Ahasuerus. The author is not identified.

**Famous stories:** The king raising his scepter to allow Esther’s unannounced appearance before him; Haman being hung on his own gallows; the first celebration of Purim.

**Well-known verses:** “Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal position for just such a time as this” (4:14).

**Other notes:** Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman. It is the only book that does not directly mention God.

## General Board's March meeting dominated by properties issue

The Church of the Brethren General Board affirmed the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., as the agency's headquarters and considered a recommendation to sell or lease the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., as it met March 9-13 in New Windsor, Md.

An eight-member, board-appointed Stewardship of Property Committee had engaged in a two-year study of property

exploration of "options for ministry" at the property, and it voted to hold off on a recommendation that the Emergency Response program be moved to Elgin.

Discussion, often passionate, addressed a wide range of concerns. The meeting included the opportunity for employees and volunteers from both locations to speak, as well as executives of other agencies, local Church of the Brethren members, district leaders, and visitors.

One concern raised by members of the Stewardship of Property Committee was that property is driving the board's ministries, instead of the ministries guiding use of property. The committee's report also noted financial difficulties facing two of the three General Board programs based in New Windsor—the New Windsor Conference Center and Service Ministries, which ships relief materials around the world. The committee concluded that the third program, Emergency Response, is not dependent on the New Windsor location.

The shipping of material resources is primarily contract work for other organizations, the largest being Church World Service, Interchurch Medical Assistance Inc. (IMA), and Lutheran World Relief. The committee learned that these organizations expect a downward trend in shipping material resources because "there is less need and usefulness in sending clothing as an appropriate response to disaster worldwide," and they prefer to buy materials locally because it is more efficient and stimulates the local economy. The committee also said it

heard no support for the operation of a conference center as part of the General Board's core mission.

In deliberating, board members asked questions about financial implications of the recommendations, the "human cost" of such a decision in terms of jobs and relationship to the New Windsor community, the history and tradition of the Brethren Service Center, and the value of providing services to ecumenical partners.

Some board members said they wanted to encourage programs at New Windsor to go forward "with vigor," while others wondered whether it was time for a new model. The board struggled with how best to proceed, and with a small majority voted to create a committee to "explore options for ministries related to properties associated with the Brethren Service Center."

In other decisions related to the property report, the board began a move to consolidate leadership of the staff at the General Offices, affirmed the General Offices as its headquarters, and directed staff to "develop an action plan regarding facilities use and improvements in Elgin," including moving forward with a new roof for the offices. General secretary Stan Noffsinger and his family are planning to move to Elgin in June.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

*Among those who took the opportunity to speak to the General Board about the recommendations from the Stewardship of Property Committee was Emily Larson. A member of Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, Larson is a volunteer hostess for the New Windsor Conference Center.*

usage at the Elgin and New Windsor properties. Committee chair Dale Roth said the report and its recommendations represented the committee's "best effort" to "project the best course for the church."

Other business at the meeting included briefings on expansions in the Emergency Response program and the workcamp program of the Youth and Young Adult office.

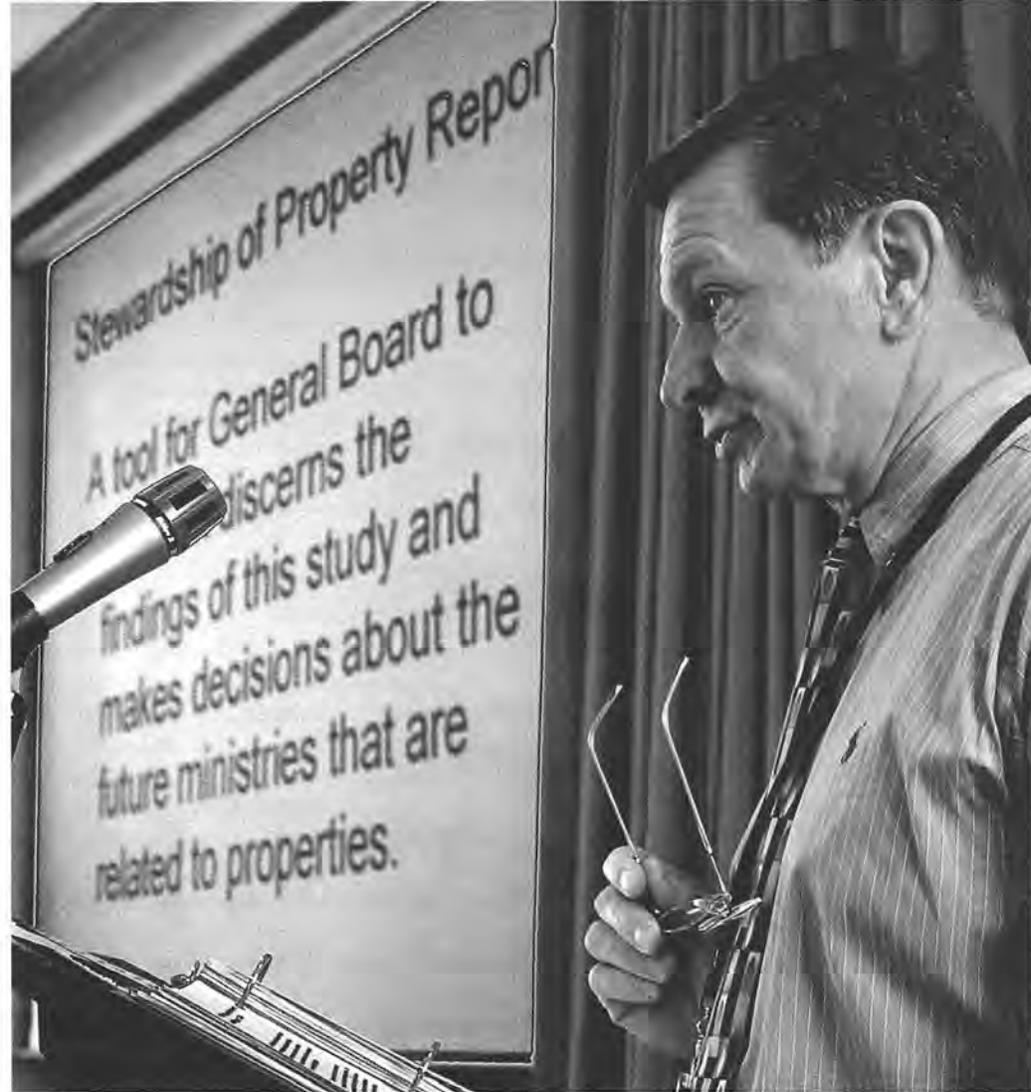
### Board acts on property recommendations

The board acted affirmatively on many of the Stewardship of Property Committee's recommendations but departed from them at two significant points: It put aside a decision to sell or lease the Brethren Service Center, calling instead for an



*A love offering for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) is blessed with prayer by General Board chair Glenn Mitchell.*

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



*Stewardship of Properties Committee chair Dale Roth presents the group's report and recommendations to the General Board in March.*

and to offer an intergenerational experience in the program, she told the board.

The workcamp plan also received an enthusiastic response. "It's right in line with the boldest, most exciting news we could have thought of this weekend," board member Kate Spire said.

Other reports were received on year-end finances; the denominational study emphasis, *Together: Conversations on Being the Church*; a proposed historic peace churches conference in Asia in late 2007; the new *Gather 'Round* Sunday school curriculum; the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches; and initial steps for the Sudan initiative. Global Mission Partnerships staff said that a series of Mission Alive conferences is being planned following feedback from a first conference held last year. The next Mission Alive conference is slated for April 13-15, 2007, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

A love offering for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) received \$7,723, including \$5,000 brought from Western Pennsylvania District by Annual Conference moderator Ronald Beachley. The offering responded to interreligious violence that destroyed or damaged five EYN churches.

### **Called beyond the waters**

As the board considered its decisions in a meeting room sometimes filled with tension and emotion, the theme "Called Beyond the Waters" evoked the waters of baptism. At opening worship, board chair Glenn Mitchell told the story of his own baptism. "As I climbed the stairs on the far side and the water dripped off of me, I had a sharp sense that things would never be the same."

Mitchell reminded the group that for the first disciples, the call of Christ was beyond the waters they were so familiar with as fisherman. "They were called to leave," Mitchell said. "There is little vision in the New Testament for a settled life. Always in God, there is the call beyond the waters of our current commitment, beyond the shores of our familiarity . . . to the mission that awaits beyond where we can see, what we know, and all we've cherished as home. We are invited to trust, in brothers and sisters, in God, in the movement of the Spirit."

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

### **Budget parameter changes**

The board expanded its budget parameter for 2006 to anticipate more than the usual number of grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund, and to include three new staff positions.

The new staff positions are a full-time director and an "in-country" staff person for the board's new Sudan initiative, and an associate director of Emergency Response. The effect of the changes will be offset by new income. The budget parameter for expenses was increased by \$883,900, to a total of \$10,145,470.

### **Plans for expansion**

Emergency Response director Roy Winter presented a plan for expanding the building of housing for Gulf Coast hurricane survivors by constructing modular homes, and received support from the board. "I am just so excited," said board member Ramona Pence. "I think this is moving in the right direction."

Goals for the modular home project include building a home a week, expanding into more Gulf Coast rebuilding sites, and attracting long-term project managers and

more volunteers. The new project may establish a "factory" operation in southern Virginia, where the homes would be assembled, and might expand possibilities for disaster volunteers to work closer to home as districts could build parts of the homes off-site. The project would require the purchase of additional vehicles and tools to equip the extra project sites. This project would be in addition to current repair and rebuilding projects in Ohio, Florida, and Mississippi, and would not replace the program's traditional work.

Chris Douglas, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, presented a plan to expand the board's workcamp ministry by hiring an additional staff member. In recent years, the workcamp ministry primarily has been for junior and senior high youth and young adults, and has been carried out by Brethren Volunteer Service workers under Douglas' supervision. Her plan highlighted the high demand for the workcamp experience, with many of the annual workcamps having been "sold out" recently. There is a call, as well, for workcamp opportunities to include families and congregation groups

## ISRAEL/PALESTINE



The delegation to Israel and Palestine learned first-hand about the tension between Palestinian villagers, extremist Israeli settlers, and the military presence. The 16-member delegation lived and worked with CPT teams based in Hebron and the village of At-tuwani, whose efforts to witness and document the situation help decrease violence.

**January 20:** Now we are based in the CPT office and apartment in Hebron. We spent one day in At-tuwani, learning about life in a 500-year-old village of 150 people, constantly harassed and occasionally attacked by extremist settlers from the settlement built next to the village in 1982. Four members of our delegation are spending additional time there. They will

help the farmers plow their fields near the settlement by providing an international presence as they work.

Yesterday we saw the work of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, which has restored and repaired hundreds of homes and shops in the old city to keep this besieged and heavily occupied part of the city from being abandoned, and offering incentives to homeowners, renters, and shopkeepers to stay. In addition to learning from speakers and organizations, we also learned a great deal by visiting families in the area, eating with them, and hearing their stories.

**January 24:** While in Jerusalem we have met with a number of Israeli groups, including rabbis, persons who have lost family members to the violence here, and Israeli conscientious objectors. Many people say that without an end to the occupation, Israel can never expect to have peace and security. The delegation departed for home today, concluding its time together with a closing meeting and a final Middle Eastern meal together.

**January 30:** The recent elections for members of the Palestinian national assembly resulted in a surprise victory for the Hamas party. Even Hamas did not expect it. This should help them move more into the mainstream of Palestinian political life, building on their long experience as a religious, social-service organization working at the grass-roots.

It's interesting that the Hamas we hear about in the news back home is not like the real organization here. While there is a splinter group that has carried out violent attacks, the primary organization is concerned with education, housing, and the basic needs of the people. The fact that there have been no attacks from Hamas in over a year seems to be evidence of a turn toward constructive political engagement.

I will be leaving tomorrow. It has been good to work here, but I am glad to be going home.

Bob Gross is co-executive director of On Earth Peace, an Annual Conference-reportable agency of the Church of the Brethren with ministries in peacemaking and reconciliation.

**In January, 16 people joined a delegation to Palestine and Israel sponsored by On Earth Peace and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), seeing the situation and learning from Israelis and Palestinians first-hand. Three-fourths of the delegates were members of the Church of the Brethren. The group was led by Bob Gross, co-executive director of On Earth Peace, who kept a journal during the trip. This article is based on excerpts from his journal.**

**January 4:** Soon I'll be leaving for the airport. I should arrive in Tel Aviv on Thursday. I'll go directly to Hebron to join up with the CPT team there. There is one CPT team in Hebron and one in At-tuwani, a village south of Hebron. I'll spend the weekend with the CPT teams, and then go to Jerusalem, Hebron, and Bethlehem to make final arrangements for the delegation.

**January 6:** After two days of traveling, I arrived at At-tuwani to find a very sad sight: During the night, settlers from the nearby Israeli settlement of Maon had hacked all the branches off a grove of more than 100 olive trees. The trees should survive, but won't bear again for about five years. Amazing how stoic the Palestinian farmers are. 'God is good,' they say.

**January 13:** The delegation arrived safely today. . . . We are settled at a hostel in the Old City of Jerusalem. We'll begin tomorrow with a tour to see the effects of the occupation and the separation wall in the area in and around Jerusalem.

**January 17:** This delegation is working together with grace, resilience, and good sense. We just returned from two days in Bethlehem. We met with organizations working with children in peacemaking, with refugees, with land and water rights under the Israeli occupation, and with nonviolent direct action organizing and training. We were the overnight guests of a family in the huge refugee camp near Bethlehem. We enjoyed their hospitality and heard a few of their stories. These are inspiring people. Living under a crushing occupation, trying to find a way to live and raise their children, trying to build a society with so many obstacles placed in their way, yet somehow they seem to maintain hope and purpose.

## On Earth Peace honors life of Christian peacemaker Tom Fox

Tom Fox, one of four members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) who disappeared in Iraq in November 2005, was found dead in Baghdad on March 9. The Associated Press reported that Fox's body had gunshots to his head and chest. Fox, from Clear Brook, Va., was 54 years old.

The other three CPT workers who disappeared with Fox on Nov. 26—Harmeet Singh Sooden, Norman Kember, and Jim Loney—were seen alive in a brief videotape dated Feb. 28 that was shown on Al Jazeera television March 7. The three were freed by US and British troops later in March.

On Earth Peace, a Church of the Brethren agency with a close relationship to CPT, issued a statement honoring Fox and his commitment to peacemaking. "The tragic news of the death of Tom Fox brings pain and grief to many of us," the statement said.

Fox, a Quaker, "was aware of the possible costs of bringing a Christian witness of nonviolence into a war zone," it continued. "He wrote, 'We reject violence to punish anyone. We ask that there be no retaliation on relatives or property. We forgive those who consider us their enemies. We hope that in loving both friends and enemies . . . We can contribute in some small way to transforming this volatile situation.' "



Tom Fox, a Quaker from Clear Brook, Va., served in Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams until being abducted along with three others in late November.

A statement released by CPT said, "Even as we grieve the loss of our beloved colleague, we stand in the light of his strong witness to the power of love and the courage of nonviolence. That light reveals the way out of fear and grief and war." It characterized Fox as one "who combined a lightness of spirit, a firm opposition to all oppression, and the recognition of God in everyone."

On Earth Peace has a close liaison relationship with CPT and has co-sponsored peace delegations to Israel/Palestine. "We stand beside our CPT sisters and brothers in this time of loss, and we deeply appreciate their bold and loving response to this violent act," On Earth Peace said as

it called on Church of the Brethren congregations and individuals to join in prayer for Fox's family and the other three CPT workers who had disappeared with him.

As of mid-March, Church of the Brethren member Peggy Gish continued to work in Baghdad with the CPT team there. Originally a violence-reduction initiative of the Historic Peace Churches (Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, and Quaker), CPT now enjoys support and membership from a wide range of Christian denominations.

## Sustaining Pastoral Excellence identifies leadership as key issue

Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership director Jonathan Shively said that "exciting things are happening" two years into the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative.

Overall, the initiative—funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc.—is having success, Shively said. "Congregations are being enriched by enhanced pastoral leadership," he said. "New gifts are being discovered and exercised. Confidence is rising. A sense of purposefulness is emerging. God's Spirit is leading in new and exciting ways."

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, which offers continuing education events and support groups for experienced pastors, is also making new discoveries. "One particularly surprising discovery has been an ambivalence around the inclusion of 'leadership' as part of the core identity of our pastors," Shively said. "In our work with 18 pastors through Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership, we were caught off guard by the 'dis-ease' expressed toward the role of

leader. Most of these pastors did not identify themselves as a leader per se, and held limited views on the extent to which the pastoral role could and/or should influence the vision, mission, and ministry of a congregation."

The Advanced Foundations project, also a part of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative, has become a process of not only enhancing the leadership capacity of pastors, as originally designed, but also a process of self-discovery and identity formation for these pastors. "The identity that is being discovered is an identity as leader, someone who can, through the appropriate exercise of influence, make a difference in the life and witness of the congregation with which they serve," Shively said

Through the Lilly grant, the Academy has been able to offer the two-year Advanced Foundations study process virtually free of charge for pastors who participate. The process includes eight four-day retreats over a two-year period.

Courtesy of Val Kline



Indiana pastors (front row) Val Kline, Dan Riccius, Bev Weaver, Gale Burkholder, and (back row, right) Bruce Hostetler visit with Alex, a pastor in the Brazilian Church of the Brethren, during their Sustaining Pastoral Excellence travel experience.

As of early March, enrollment was open for the last Lilly-funded "cohort" group of pastors to begin work in January 2007 and conclude in November 2008. Brochures are available from the Brethren Academy, or go to [www.bethanyseminary.edu](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu), or e-mail [pastoralexcellence@bethanyseminary.edu](mailto:pastoralexcellence@bethanyseminary.edu) for more information. The Brethren Academy is a joint program of Bethany Theological Seminary and the Church of the Brethren General Board.

## Brethren in Puerto Rico minister in diverse ways

In tents, in homes, in the halls of government, and in the places forgotten by those who govern; from the mountain tops, and in the low valleys: These are just a few of the places where God is working in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico, an island slightly less than three times the size of Rhode Island, is home to seven Church of the Brethren congregations as part of Atlantic Southeast District. For a week in February, a group of pastors from Northern Indiana District visited all seven congregations on a trip coordinated by General Board Congregational Life Team staff members Duane Grady and Carol Yeazell. The trip was designed to strengthen connections between churches in the two districts and to deepen knowledge of the ministries taking place in Puerto Rico.

Highlights found in the Puerto Rican congregations included the following:

- *Cristo Nuestra Paz, Yahuecas*: This fellowship is growing and expanding. One of their hopes is to buy additional land for a parking lot. Not only is the current lot too small, it is treacherous after rain.

## Brethren from all 23 districts trained to facilitate 'Together'

"This experience was everything I hoped for," said Kathy Reid, reflecting on the training event for "Together: Conversations on Being the Church." Reid is executive director of the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and is on the Together planning committee.

The training, Feb. 24-26 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., gathered more than 140 people from across the denomination to talk about what it means to be the church, in preparation for facilitating Together conversations in their own areas. Participants included representatives of the 23 Church of the Brethren districts, district representatives to Standing Committee, district executives, and representatives of the Annual Conference agencies.

The training was led by Lisa M. Hess and Brian D. Maguire, who will serve as leaders for the Together conversations at Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, July 1-5. Hess teaches practical theology at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio; Maguire is pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Xenia, Ohio.

A Together study guide published by Brethren Press sparked conversation in small groups at the training. The guide—written by James L. Benedict, pastor of Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren—is the primary Together tool, providing a flexible plan for groups to worship, learn, listen, pray, and reflect. (Order from Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 for \$4.95



Becky Ullom

- *Iglesia de Los Hermanos, Castañer*: Pastored by General Board member Jaime Diaz, this church hopes to baptize five new members this spring. Discipleship cells are flourishing.

- *Iglesia de Los Hermanos, Rio Prieto*: This mountain-top church is building a new sanctuary to accommodate 150 people. Pastor Miguel Torres broadcasts a weekly prayer service via radio, and in past years, the congregation has hosted a regional rodeo as an evangelism tool.

- *Iglesia de Los Hermanos, Vega Baja*: This urban church incorporates electric guitars, a keyboard, a small chorus, and even pantomiming into its ministries. Offering significant support to the pastor

A group of Indiana pastors visits the church in Manati, one of the seven Church of the Brethren congregations in Puerto Rico the group visited.

and to the congregation is their 23-year-old moderator.

- *La Casa del Amigo, Arecibo*: Teeming with energy and life, this congregation meets under a tent. They hope to construct a building in order to protect members from

extreme heat and rain. As an evangelism event last Christmas, the youth and young adults of this congregation performed a play about the birth of the Church of the Brethren in Puerto Rico.

- *Pueblo de Dios, Manati*: This congregation hopes to open an after-school mentoring program as a witness to God's immense love and concern.

- *Segunda Iglesia Cristo Misionera, Caimito*: This fellowship is deeply rooted in helping its home community. Each day, lunch is served free of charge to those in need of a meal. Additionally, people can access a doctor, dentist, psychologist, and other services through the Community Center run by the congregation.—Becky Ullom

each, and the accompanying DVD for \$4.95 each, plus shipping and handling; order one guide for each group participant and leader, one DVD for each congregation or group.)

Participants at the training also worshiped together, met for Bible study, and planned Together conversations in their areas. "The design and details for continuing the process will be determined by the people from the individual districts present," said Julie Hostetter, a former member of the General Board Congregational Life Teams who chaired the training event committee.

The Together conversation was initiated in 2003 by a statement from the district executives identifying fragmentation in the Church of the Brethren and calling for conversation. Since then, a group of leaders and staff of Annual Conference agencies and representatives of the district executives have planned a denomination-wide discussion. From its beginning, the broad intent of the work is to help bring about a renewal of the church.

The training "was a good experience," said Lerry Fogle, executive director of Annual Conference, "but one that needs to go beyond discussion of what it means to be the church, to *being* the Church. Hopefully that will occur in greater measure in the months and years ahead."

The 2006 Annual Conference will include four 30-minute sessions on Together "that hold the possibility to broaden the discussion and spur us on to our God-ordained ministry," Fogle said.

The Together process will culminate at Annual Conference 2007. For more information go to [www.togetherconversations.org](http://www.togetherconversations.org) or (in Spanish) [www.conversacionesjuntos.org](http://www.conversacionesjuntos.org).





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

Six Bridgewater alumni were honored as part of the college's annual Alumni Weekend celebration April 21-22. Richard W. Homan, of Franklin, W.Va., and Mary Hooker Weybright of Nokesville, Md., received the 2006 Ripples Society Medals; Edward E. Clark Jr. of Waynesboro, Va., received the 2006 Distinguished Alumnus Award; Iliana S. Ilieva of Fairfax, Va., and Eric W. Varnau of Stephens City, Va., received 2006 Young Alumnus Awards; and Anne Haynes Price of La Verne, Calif., received the West-Whitelow Award for Humanitarian Service.



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

Retired professor William Puffenberger discussed Brethren Service Cups in a Feb. 23 talk at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Puffenberger covered the creation of the Brethren Service Cup as a symbol for the Brethren Service Commission in the late 1940s, including design modifications and uses of the cup since that time. A display of the cups was also opened.



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

Award-winning children's author and illustrator Christopher Raschka, a Huntingdon native, participated in a book-signing at Juniata's Beeghly Library on March 27. His two Caldecott award-winning books were available for purchase.



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

A panel of internationally recognized peace-makers and representatives of peace-minded organizations on March 24 took part in "Practicing Nonviolence Amidst War and Conflict," a forum on reconciliation, humanitarian aid, and nonviolent action in the war zones of Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world. Panelists were Le Ly Hayslip, Michael Nagler, Sarah Holewinski, Claude Anshin Thomas, and representatives from Peace Boat Japan/USA.



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

Manchester's A Cappella Choir and alumni will return to Carnegie Hall on May 26, 2007, with music director Debra J. Lynn wielding the baton. The program will feature an original composition, "Prayer for Peace," by Debora E. DeWitt, associate professor of music. The choir previously performed at Carnegie in 2001.



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

McPherson's Office of Advancement recently announced the establishment of a new endowed Alumni Legacy Scholarship Fund for the benefit of alumni children. Beginning in the fall of 2006, three \$400 renewable scholarships will be awarded annually to eligible incoming students. An anonymous alumni couple has committed \$20,000 to the college to endow the scholarship; a goal has been set to reach \$100,000 in the fund during the remaining years of the "My MC" campaign.

**Superchic[k] joins this summer's NYC lineup**

In addition to speakers and music leadership previously announced for this summer's National Youth Conference (NYC) in Fort Collins, Colo., Christian band Superchic[k] will perform the evening of July 23, the NYC office announced.

Superchic[k] is an "up-and-coming" band, the office said, and is already getting airplay on radio. The six-member band, based in Chicago, calls itself "nonconformists who believe in themselves and their ability to effect change." Its most recent album is "Beauty from Pain."

Ken Medema, a National Youth Conference regular, will also be on the schedule again this year. Medema, a blind musician based in Michigan, is known for his ability to make up songs on the spot from audience members' stories.

In a change to the schedule, Beth Gunzel will replace Beatrice Biira as one of the evening worship speakers. Biira, a Ugandan whose story became well known via the Heifer International book *Beatrice's Goat*, was unable to get a visa to come to the United States. Gunzel, a young adult from York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill., currently works with the Church of the Brethren General Board's microloan/economic development program in the Dominican Republic.

NYC will take place July 22-27 at Colorado State University. Registration for the event was nearing 3,500 as of early April. June 25 has been designated as an NYC Prayer Day. For more information on the conference, go to [www.nyc2006.org](http://www.nyc2006.org).

**Four to serve on 2006 Youth Peace Travel Team**

Four young women will form the 2006 Church of the Brethren Youth Peace Travel Team.

Chosen from among a field of applicants were Corinne Lipscomb, a Manchester College student from Springfield (Ill.) Church of the Brethren; Christina McPherson, a McPherson (Kan.) College student from Boise Valley Church of the Brethren in Meridian, Idaho; Margaret Bortner, a Lycoming College student from Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; and Karen Duhai, an Elizabethtown (Pa.) College student from Bedford (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

The four young adults will travel to Brethren youth camps throughout the country this summer, as well as to National Youth Conference in Colorado. The team's work focuses on talking with other young people about the Christian message of peacemaking and the Brethren heritage in this area.

The team is sponsored annually by On Earth Peace, Outdoor Ministries Association, and the Church of the Brethren General Board's Youth and Young Adult Ministry Office, Brethren Witness/Washington Office, and Brethren Volunteer Service.



# 'Munich': The price of revenge

In Shakespeare's day the Elizabethans enjoyed a bare-knuckle, no-holds-barred kind of theater we can only envy now. No subject was safe or sacred. But one sort of drama was guaranteed to scare them out of their socks—or stockings: the revenge play.



FRANK RAMIREZ

*The Spanish Tragedy, The Revenger's Tragedy, and Hamlet* are just a few examples of this genre. The Elizabethans took delight in these plays because they knew that vengeance belonged to God, and that anyone who sought for revenge would ultimately pay a high, perhaps even eternal, price for revenge.

We're not much different than the Elizabethans, in that movies built around the theme of revenge command large audiences. When justice fails in the face of a brutal crime the hero or heroine generally takes matters into their own hands and finally brings the malefactors to justice—usually with a lot of explosives and firearms thrown in. These movies are supposed to feel good, to confirm that sometimes it's necessary for us to take justice into our own hands, and if

mystery, Spielberg tells the story of those who sought revenge on behalf of Israel. He has produced a taut, tense film full of bullets, bombs, intrigue, and suspense. It is gripping, and at times grotesque. Spielberg forces us to ask the same questions that begin to haunt the characters in the film: What price revenge?

Do the political murders really solve anything, or do they make things worse? What happens to those who perform murder on behalf of the state? Can they ever resume a normal life? Yet if nothing is done, will justice ever be accomplished?

At one point, when members of the assassination team are debating whether they should be engaged in murder at all, one of the characters reminds the others that God's people are supposed to be righteous. Not safe, not secure, but righteous.

This movie will not please those who wish for it to fulfill a particular political agenda. Though the Palestinians are not fully fleshed out, they are not cardboard figures of evil, either, and the anguish of their cause is subtly communicated throughout. Nor will those who wish to castigate—or fully vindicate—Israel be pleased, either.

Without fully answering the questions he poses,

Spielberg somehow manages to humanize everyone in the horrific drama of *Munich* without excusing or trivializing the terrorists themselves. Unfortunately, because of some violence, nudity, and sexual

situations, church groups probably cannot arrange for youth classes to watch the film for discussion. Mature adult elective groups might find a way to arrange a movie night when the film is released on DVD in order for discussion to take place. Parents can review the film and decide for themselves if their teens should watch.

This cannot be an academic discussion. In our own country the recent debate, or lack of it, over the use of torture as a means towards an end should remind us how important it is for us as a people to be righteous. And as Brethren, I should like to think we have something to offer in this discussion. At the very least we should be asking some of these questions and challenging ourselves to provide answers—biblical answers—to the temptation, and damnation, of revenge. **ZZ**

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

**WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING:**

**"Yes, it's violent, but the questions raised, the internal journey followed by the film's characters subtly tends toward peace, or at least rethinking all this violence."**—Ross Anthony, *Hollywood Report*

the squeamish don't like it, too bad. Revenge dramas are meant to be satisfying, and, to some extent, they are—especially when they fill us with such a sense of righteousness that any qualms or feelings of guilt are washed away in the cheers that accompany the explosions.

Steven Spielberg is one of the few filmmakers who has changed the way movies are made and pushed the limits of what can be brought to the screen. Because his films tend to be popular at the box office, there have been times when his movies have been overlooked for major awards. His *Schindler's List*, set in the Holocaust of World War II, earned him the honors he had long deserved.

His latest film, *Munich*, breaks the mold for the classic revenge play, and forces us to ask ourselves uncomfortable questions.

After Palestinian terrorists took 11 Israeli athletes hostage at the Munich Olympics of 1972, a debacle ensued in which both Palestinians and Israelis were killed. In the wake of that massacre it is believed that Israel created a special task force to hunt down and kill those who planned it.

Though the actual events are shrouded in layers of

**ABOUT THE MOVIE**

**Release date:** Initially released in theaters on Dec. 23, 2005, with wider release Jan. 6, 2006. The DVD release date had not yet been announced at press time.

**Rating:** R. **Length:** 164 minutes. **Director:** Steven Spielberg.



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## 2006 Ecumenical Luncheon Tuesday, July 4—Des Moines, Iowa



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### Caterpillar is a good citizen

December 26, 2004: A giant tsunami devastates the Indian Ocean basin. Within hours Caterpillar, Caterpillar dealers, and their employees donate machines, generators, and time to rescue and clean up the aftermath. August 29, 2005: Hurricane Katrina lashes its fury on the Gulf Coast of the United States. Again Caterpillar, Caterpillar dealers, and their employees rush donated equipment to the site to work with residents to begin the recovery. When South Africa suffered under the yoke of apartheid and companies abandoned the country, Caterpillar stayed, hired black African workers, paid them the same wages as whites, advanced them to positions of authority, and helped them obtain proper housing, all in the face of the apartheid government.

The implications of the article in the February MESSENGER [News, “Brethren Benefit Trust agrees to dialogue with Caterpillar”] have the effect of smearing the name of a company that goes far beyond normal corporate citizenship to help people in need around the world. The article itself states Caterpillar met *all* BBT benchmarks. The article also contradicts itself on Caterpillar's responsibility when it says, “Caterpillar's large D-9 bulldozers, which have been purchased through the US military . . .” Caterpillar does NOT sell machines to foreign military organizations. All of Caterpillar's sales outside the United States go through independent dealers. Caterpillar cannot control who uses their machines or how they use them any more than Ford, GM, or Toyota can control how owners use their vehicles.

If the BBT had invested all of its assets in Caterpillar stock in September 2004 they would have almost doubled their investment as of today. The role of the BBT is to abide by their own rules and protect the assets of pastors' retirement savings and Brethren church investments and be fiscally responsible. This current path against Caterpillar is anything but responsible.

I am a Caterpillar retiree who spent 35 years working for a company where I could easily be

*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.*

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Brethren and go to work with the knowledge I was not compromising my faith for dollars. The BBT is on the wrong track in this matter.

**Gilbert M. Crosby**  
Peoria, Ill.

**Editor's note:** A district-initiated resolution on this issue is scheduled to come to Annual Conference this summer. BBT is planning an insight session on its process at the Conference.

## Be fools for Christ's sake

Make no mistake about it, Tom Fox was a fool! Most anyone will tell you that. Tom Fox, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams, was found killed in Iraq. He leaves behind a wife and two children in Clearbrook, Va.

Fox and three others were kidnapped by an Islamic extremist group late last fall. Anyone who knew anything could have told him that this would have happened. Tom Fox knew this as well. He knew he risked his life by going to Iraq on a mission for peace. The day before his abduction Fox was quoted as saying, "There are many who are willing to die for war but how many are willing to die for peace?" Tom Fox was a fool; make no mistake about it, a fool for Christ!

Many would have said this about Jesus. He

was a fool for thinking that a humiliating death on the cross could bear any impact on humanity's sinfulness. How foolish is it that this symbol, this humiliating form of execution, could ever become a symbol of hope and redemption? An executed criminal becomes the savior of sinners! How foolish can this be? This is the foolishness of God. God in his grace and wisdom uses the foolish and weak and makes them strong and wise.

God is looking for folks who are foolish enough to believe that God is big enough to do what appears impossible with humility and nonresistance. Many called Martin Luther King Jr. a fool for believing in the power of non-violent resistance. And yet

through his civil disobedience, the world was made acutely aware of the African-American plight. Many believed Rosa Parks was a fool for thinking that one woman's actions could precipitate a whole movement towards racial equality.

The kingdom of God will not come when we try and force it through military conquest, political strategy, or foreign policy maneuvering. The power of the cross; the symbol of weakness, the symbol of rejection, the symbol of defeat, and the symbol of death becomes, as stated by historian Donald B. Kraybill, the "upside-down kingdom." The symbol of weakness becomes strength! The symbol of rejection becomes

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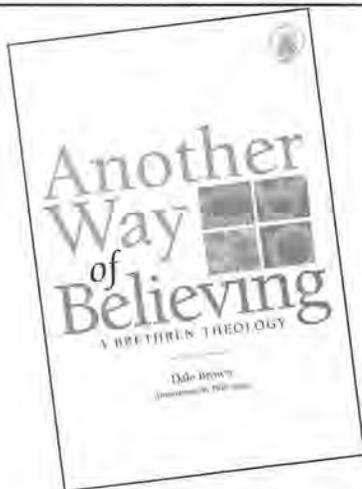


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God's act of love and forgiveness! The symbol of defeat becomes a sign of victory! The symbol of death becomes the path to life! The symbol of eternal damnation becomes the way of salvation!

I grant you it is foolishness. But we can no longer rest on the wisdom of humanity. We can no longer depend on the strength of military actions. We can no longer rely on hope through our technological advances. Our only hope rests on the cross of Jesus Christ. Make no mistake about it, Tom Fox was a fool, and so should we be—fools for Christ!

David Whitten  
Mount Solon, Va.

### Embrace Jesus, not doctrine

The article on the postmodern world in the March issue asked the question, "Does the Church of the Brethren have relevance for today?" I say, absolutely!

Three hundred years ago, Brethren practiced faith rather than preach "church doctrine." They were like the little crab that regularly sheds its hard outer shell. The Brethren have shed their hard outer shells which is "church doctrine." This they did as the need arose and changes took place.

Their creed is the New Testament, not

a specific set of words that all people are expected to recite. Such a creed does not allow for the various individual confessions of faith.

The Brethren are not exclusive nationalists. They have concern for other nations. They gave service to Europe after World War II. They helped develop the United Nations.

Many Christians believe they have the one and only truth about faith in God. They fill the churches where the leadership tells them that they are the only ones of God's creation that will be saved.

Some churches have low attendance and are struggling. These leaders preach the teachings of Jesus as their faith. It is not easy for Christians to live according to the way that Jesus showed us was God's will for his creation.

Are we willing to follow Jesus' way? If you are asked, "Are you saved?," maybe you should answer, "Ask my neighbor and those who live near me about me." Let us follow the teachings of Jesus.

D.M. Naragon  
North Liberty, Ind.

**Correction:** Roger and Mamie Duvall and John and Carolyn Imler, all of Everett, Pa., were inadvertently listed under both the "Wedding Anniversaries" and "Deaths" sections of Turning Points (p. 31) in April. They were indeed just celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, and we wish them many more happy years together!

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**Have you always wanted to work in a bookstore?** Brethren Press is looking for volunteers to assist in set-up, operation, and tear-down of the Annual Conference bookstore in Des Moines. If you have interest and time to volunteer, contact Jean Clements at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120 or [jclements\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:jclements_gb@brethren.org).

**Consignment sales at Annual Conference.** Brethren Press makes space available at Annual Conference for individuals and groups to sell items to Conference attendees on a consignment basis. Consignment space must be reserved by June 1. For information on consignment sales, contact Brethren Press Consignments, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694 or [kstocking\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:kstocking_gb@brethren.org).

**PASTORS NEEDED.** Congregations in many of the denomination's 23 districts are in need of strong, trained Christian leaders who are dedicated to Church of the Brethren beliefs and practices to serve as pastor. The available placements are both full-time and part-time and include some associate/second-staff positions. The congregations vary widely in size and program. A full listing of openings can be found at [www.brethren.org/genbd/ministry/placement.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/ministry/placement.htm). Contact the appropriate district executive or call the Ministry office at 800-323-8039.

**Apostle, District of Illinois and Wisconsin** The New Church Development Board, District of Illinois and Wisconsin, seeks an apostle to travel among the church planters and mission points of the district to encourage them in their work and to assist in the teaching of those new to the faith. The apostle will also interpret the work of the board to the existing churches and call out new church planters. Preferred candidates will have a master of divinity degree or equivalent experience and at least one year of association with the contemporary church planting movement in the Church of the Brethren. This is a half-time position.

Send letter of application and current resumé, or requests for more information, to: Dennis E Metzger, Chair, New Church Development Board, 1523 E. Walnut St., Chatham, IL 62629 217-483-4592 [d.v.metzger@att.net](mailto:d.v.metzger@att.net).

Please send information to be included in Turning Points to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 206; jclements\_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

## New Members

**Anderson, Ind.:** Catherine Allen, Vickie Dohner  
**Ashland City, Ashland, Ohio:** Helen McCartney, David Kerner, Diane Kerner, Rocky Rising, Karisa Rising  
**Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.:** Betty Yoder, Lamar Yoder  
**Blue Ridge, Va.:** Darrell Arnold, Chris Arnold  
**Cabool, Mo.:** Dan Kingston, Linda Kingston  
**Chiques, Manheim, Pa.:** Dale Zellers  
**Denton, Md.:** Norma Obier, William Obier  
**Freeburg, Paris, Ohio:** Paula Rummell  
**Friendship, Linthicum, Md.:** Debbie Hackley  
**Jacksonville, Fla.:** Travis Brown, Sanjeev Singh  
**Lanark, Ill.:** Brian Sturtevant, Jen Sturtevant, Ron Strohecker, Ann Strohecker, Steve Shellhause, Sue Shellhause, Allen Brunner, Kristy Dampman, Kadie Lindsay, Rena Welch, Karen Welch, Cameron Kruse, Austin Schriener, Tina Dickman, Connan Dickman, Kim Haverland, Dick Gulley, Sonja Gulley, Anthony Preston, Amanda Preston, Taunya Guenzler, Don Kuberski, Nancy Guenzler, Les Guenzler, Diana Steffes, Steve Steffes, Mark Johnson, Dee Johnson, Jocelyn Johnson, Katelyn Johnson, Amanda Sgro, John Sgro, Sue Apple  
**Marion, Ind.:** Jordan Rumble, Terri Titus  
**McCune, Kan.:** Dakota James Crumpacker, Kayla Rae Crumpacker, Shi Ann Crumpacker, Cheryl Ingram, Dave Ingram, Samantha Jane Rakestraw  
**Modesto, Calif.:** Tom Deal, Nancy Deal, David Franklin, Sandra Franklin, Renee Gokey  
**New Fairview, York, Pa.:** Debra Wilkins, Mark Wilkins, Betty Laughman, Wayne Laughman, Ethel Grim, Malinda Napp, John Napp, Jamin Snyder, Denita Darr  
**San Diego, Calif.:** Sunkyung Lee  
**Smith River, Stuart, Va.:** Theresa Griffith  
**Springfield, Coopersburg, Pa.:** Stephanie Scholl, Kim Schwenk, Tony Schwenk, Krystina Servaty, Kaytlyn Walter, Jessica Walter, Nancy Waddell

**Trinity, Redford, Mich.:** Hollie Anderson, Matt Smucker, Stephanie Smucker  
**Venice, Fla.:** Mildred Durnbaugh  
**Westminster, Md.:** Jeanne Dussault, Mark Woodworth  
**White Oak, Manheim, Pa.:** Jacolia Copenhaver, Carlos Esh, Zachary Fahnestock, Dominic Alwine, Stephanie Bergey, Lathan Greiner, Stephanie Greiner, Geoffrey Heller, Jarrett Miller, Matthew Patches, Austin Zimmerman, Morgan Zimmerman, Jana High, Joshua High, Sophie Martin  
**Woodbury, Pa.:** Kadden Smith, Sierra Stern, Noah Over

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Brightbill, Richard and Betty,** Lebanon, Pa., 55  
**Buckingham, Samuel and Francisse,** Prairie City, Iowa, 60  
**Cassell, Bernie and Alice,** Arcanum, Ohio, 60  
**Cooper, Bill and Nancy,** Woodbury, Pa., 60  
**Eby, Devon and Elaine,** Nappanee, Ind., 50  
**Everest, Dean and Lorita,** New Paris, Ind., 50  
**Haldeman, Bob and Viola,** Manheim, Pa., 60  
**Huff, Paul and Margaret,** McCune, Kan., 65  
**Nolt, Luke and Lorraine,** Manheim, Pa., 50  
**Ritchey, James and Evelyn,** Curryville, Pa., 60  
**Roth, Book and Arlene,** Carlisle, Pa., 60  
**Shenk, Gene and Darlene,** Elizabethtown, Pa., 50  
**Walter, Don and Doris,** New Paris, Ind., 50  
**Watson, Stanley and Alice,** Modesto, Calif., 65  
**Wimer, Cam and Eleanor,** Dayton, Va., 55

## Deaths

**Barb, Frances Aldona,** 68, Basye, Va., Jan. 3  
**Baughter, Romaine,** 94, Westminster, Md., Jan. 27  
**Baxley, Paul K.,** 85, Middleburg, Fla., Jan. 30  
**Boaz, Carmen T.,** 78, San Diego, Calif., Jan. 12  
**Bollinger, Betty L.,** 82, Dixon, Ill., March 8  
**Bosserman, Luther Edward,** 81, Mount Sidney, Va., Jan. 25  
**Boyer, Louise C.,** 90, New Freedom, Pa., Dec. 7  
**Brightbill, Marlin S.,** 88, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 17  
**Brubaker, Norma,** 87, New Sharon, Iowa, Nov. 19  
**Burner, Lowell David,** 77, Keezletown, Va., Dec. 29  
**Byerly, Martha Michael,** 55,

Mount Solon, Va., Feb. 8  
**Collison, Gladys Shaffer,** 78, Denton, Md., Sept. 28  
**Comstock, Wilma E.,** 92, Olathe, Kan., Jan. 18  
**Cooksey, Dorothy,** 92, Connersville, Ind., July 6  
**Failes, James Robert, Sr.,** 80, Harrisonburg, Va., March 4  
**Frantz, Mary Catherine Strahm,** 79, Topeka, Kan., Feb. 3  
**Funk, Murrel W.,** 79, Rio, W.Va., Feb. 8  
**Garber, Virgil Lamar,** 89, Timberville, Va., Feb. 4  
**Garey, Erma Shaffer,** 88, Felton, Del., Jan. 2  
**Gettinger, Donald,** 80, Connersville, Ind., March 20, 2005  
**Golliday, Charlene Elizabeth,** 80, Mount Jackson, Va., Jan. 25  
**Graybill, Esther,** 90, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 11  
**Graybill, Wilbur,** 85, Lititz, Pa., Nov. 1  
**Halladay, Ruth Mary,** 78, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 6  
**Harshbarger, Anna,** 74, San Diego, Calif., Jan. 27  
**Hatcher, Walton Thomas,** 44, Staunton, Va., Jan. 31  
**Haynes, Louise Peterson,** 88, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 8  
**Holsinger, S. Blair,** 76, East Freedom, Pa., Feb. 1  
**Hoover, Ron.,** 58, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Feb. 15  
**Jarrels, Constance Genevieve,** 74, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 27  
**Jordan, Dwight,** 82, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 4  
**Keith, Anna Mae,** 87, Singers Glen, Va., March 4  
**Kirkdorfer, Bethia,** 90, Corpus Cristi, Texas, Feb. 21  
**Kline, Janice Keeney,** 56, Elgin, Ill., Feb. 20  
**Knavel, Berkey E.,** 90, Williston, Fla., Feb. 22  
**Knically, Virginia Kathryn,** 87, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 27  
**Kuykendall, Maude Elizabeth,** 80, Fort Scybert, W.Va., Feb. 25  
**Langdon, Donald,** 55, Westminster, Md., Jan. 18  
**Langdon, Ina,** 85, Westminster, Md., Aug. 22  
**LeFevre, James,** 92, Westminster, Md., Oct. 9  
**Lehman, Lucille C.,** 81, York, Pa., Feb. 10  
**Lehman, Murray P.,** 91, York, Pa., Feb. 12  
**Lindamood, Troy,** 71, Woodstock, Va., Feb. 10  
**Loomis, M. Pauline,** 87, Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 7  
**Loucks, Grace E.,** 95, York, Pa., Jan. 27  
**Lynn, Margaret A.,** 86, Salisbury, Pa., Jan. 28  
**Martin, Anna Mae Judy,** 75, Petersburg, W.Va., Feb. 14  
**Martz, Ray Thornton,** 74, Broadway, Va., Jan. 19  
**McClintick, Mary,** 93, New Carlisle, Ohio, Jan. 3

**Miller, Dale L.,** 64, Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 12  
**Miller, Dorothy,** 82, Delphi, Ind., Jan. 15  
**Miller, Virginia,** 82, LaPorte City, Iowa, Feb. 1  
**Mitchell, James Alfred,** 82, Mount Crawford, Va., Jan. 1  
**Montel, Evelyn,** 86, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 2  
**Myer, Mary,** 88, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 2  
**Myers, Maida Virginia,** 85, Hinton, Va., March 1  
**Myers, Nancy A.,** 80, Hagerstown, Md., Jan. 30  
**Neff, Hannah Marie Bennett,** 95, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 3  
**Neff, Naomi,** 96, Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 16  
**Newton, Catherine,** 88, Westminster, Md., Jan. 11  
**Nicely, Marie,** 92, New Lebanon, Ohio, Feb. 7  
**Owens, Eldon Beecher,** 87, Stanley, Va., Feb. 24  
**Parker, Helen,** 89, Plymouth, Ind., Jan. 31  
**Phebus, Loraine,** 79, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 10  
**Propst, Loy Adolph,** 79, Grottoes, Va., Feb. 21  
**Rogers, Albert P.,** 77, Dallas, Texas, Dec. 18  
**Rohrbaugh, Elwood A.,** 80, Gettysburg, Pa., Feb. 6  
**Root, Dayton E.,** 88, La Verne, Calif., Feb. 17  
**Rummell, James,** 84, Paris, Ohio, Sept. 10  
**Sager, Mary Bertie,** 97, Timberville, Va., Dec. 30  
**Serfling, David,** 46, Preston, Minn., Jan. 8  
**Shaffer, Ruth,** 95, Windber, Pa., March 10  
**Shank, Walter E.,** 88, Wichita, Kan., Feb. 6  
**Sharp, Viola Mae,** 90, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 5  
**Shirkey, E. Leon,** 71, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 15  
**Showalter, Shirley Hopkins,** 67, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 24  
**Simmers, C. Nelson, Sr.,** 84, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 24  
**Smith, Eugene L.,** 85, York County, Pa., Feb. 9  
**Smith, Katherine,** 86, Ashland, Ohio, Feb. 16  
**Snavely, Earl,** 87, Manheim, Pa., Oct. 26  
**Snyder, Esther,** 89, New Carlisle, Ohio, Feb. 8  
**Stoops, Minnie,** 101, Venice, Fla., Jan. 12  
**Stump, Arliss,** 84, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 17  
**Tatman, Ernest,** 90, Anderson, Ind., Feb. 7  
**Thomas, Fae,** 85, Green Cove Springs, Fla., Dec. 28  
**Tusing, Eugene S.,** 79, Timberville, Va., Jan. 30  
**Wampler, Stanley Rosclif,** 86, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 31  
**Warren, Helen,** 92, Springfield,

Ohio, Feb. 6  
**Waybright, Jesse J.,** 80, South Whitley, Ind., Feb. 14  
**Webb, Pauline Sexton,** 84, Sparta, N.C., Dec. 11  
**Welch, Arthur,** 85, Plymouth, Ind., Jan. 29  
**Whetzel, Harvey C.,** 80, Franklin, W.Va., Jan. 4  
**Wilson, Frances Hope,** 85, Petersburg, W.Va., Jan. 31  
**Wilson, Harry Cealond,** 90, Moorefield, W.Va., March 4  
**Wimmer, Ruby F.,** 75, Rocky Mount, Va., Feb. 25  
**Witmer, Ruth,** 78, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 13  
**Wolfe, Elinor,** 75, Monroeville, Pa., Feb. 9  
**Wyant, Delbert L.,** 80, Topeka, Kan., Feb. 6  
**Wymer, Robie Catherine Spiker,** 101, Strasburg, Va., Jan. 31

## Licensings

**Hade, Melvin, S. Pa. Dist. (Upper Conewago, Abbottstown, Pa.),** March 5  
**Shaffer, Daniel P., W. Pa. Dist. (Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.),** March 5  
**Singh, Christina, S/C Ind. Dist. (Richmond, Ind.),** Jan. 8  
**Smalls, Rodney D., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Baltimore, First, Baltimore, Md.),** Feb. 12  
**Wise, Scott D., S. Pa., Dist. (Mechanicsburg, Pa.),** March 5  
**Witkovsky, Kim, M. Pa. Dist. (Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.),** Feb. 19

## Ordinations

**Rowan, Thomas, W. Marva Dist. (Tearcoat, Augusta, W.Va.),** March 5

## Pastoral Placements

**Buseman, Tammy,** from youth pastor to pastor, First Baptist/Brethren, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Jan. 1  
**Salsman, Gordon,** from minister of family life to pastor, First Baptist/Brethren, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Jan. 1  
**Sparks, Sharon,** pastor, Glendora, Calif., Feb. 1  
**Wagner, John O., II,** pastor, Mount Etna, Iowa, Jan. 1  
**Zeek, Rebecca Miller,** pastor, Twenty-eighth Street, Altoona, Pa., March 15

# How rude!

**I**t's not just your imagination. People are apparently becoming less civil than they once were.

In a recent AP-IPSOS poll, 69 percent of respondents said people today were ruder than they were two or three decades ago. Ninety-three percent of them placed the blame on parents, for failing to teach children etiquette and manners.

An Associated Press story on the poll said that "increasing informality . . . combined with self-absorbed communication gadgets and a demand for instant gratification have strained common courtesies to the breaking point."



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

The church isn't immune. Take, for example, a news item on internal divisions in the Presbyterian Church (USA) that appeared several years ago in *The Christian Century*. It quoted a former professor, Shirley Guthrie, who vented his frustrations over all the squabbling to denominational leaders.

"You've got self-righteous people on all sides arguing with other self-righteous people," Guthrie said. Maybe, he added, "God is saying 'No' to what we are and these trivial little debates we're having in the church while hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death."

Likewise, a *Christianity Today* piece noted the often-vociferous tone of letters that came to the magazine. "We believers are the most offended, wounded, upset, shocked, thunderstruck, consternated, and . . . outraged group of people on the planet," guest columnist Jody Vickery wrote. "Is there something in the baptismal waters that makes Christians thin-skinned?"

"We cannot bring civil action against a fellow believer and stay on the good side of 1 Corinthians 6," Vickery continued, "but we sure can be downright uncivil to each other." Vickery concludes that we get outraged and indignant over so many trivial things that we burn out by the time something comes along that really deserves outrage.

Why are we so quick to anger? And why do we so quickly take out that anger on the people around us, whether strangers or friends?

People sometimes ask about the criteria used in deciding whether to publish a letter in MESSENGER. Two big red flags will normally rule one out: if it feels like a mean-spirited personal attack against someone—better

handled in a personal conversation—or if it seems particularly unhelpful to the church at-large, and we do receive both types occasionally.

Speeches on the floor of Annual Conference sometimes display this same insensitivity. Even the discussion at the recent General Board meetings, when an impassioned debate arose around a proposal to sell or lease the Brethren Service Center, demonstrated how quickly emotion can trump relationship.

"We" and "they" language quickly entered the conversation. Speakers hurt and put down entire groups of people, perhaps without even realizing it. Some later comments in the local media packed similar sideswipes. It may be understandable when these slips occur in such a charged environment; what's less understandable is how comments like these happen so often.

In his essay "Bowling Alone," later expanded into a book, Robert D. Putnam observed an increasing disengagement in American society. He used bowling as an example, pointing to statistics that show more people bowling for fun, but many fewer people bowling in organized leagues. Religion, too, he says, is becoming "more self-defined." Such trends, Putnam summarizes, lead to an erosion of "social trust."

Is it possible that Christians, including Brethren, have

**Part of the joy of being in the theater, he said, is "strangers brought together by the story they've just seen." Ganis has a vested interest in promoting movie attendance, of course, but it was also a stirring statement about community.**

ceased to trust each other? When we call each other "sister" or "brother" do we really mean it? It should always be OK to ask questions in a spirit of discernment, but it seems we are more and more easily skipping questions for accusations, forgetting that the people around us are indeed people. When that happens, it's easy to be rude.

During this year's Oscars show, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences president Sid Ganis lifted up the experience of seeing a movie on the big screen at the theater versus watching it at home on a DVD. Part of the joy of being in the theater, he said, is "strangers brought together by the story they've just seen." Ganis has a vested interest in promoting movie attendance, of course, but it was also a stirring statement about community.

Christians, too, have been brought together by a powerful story—the Story recorded in the pages of the Bible, and the Gospels in particular. Is that still enough to bring us together beyond our differences? If we are indeed "strangers no more, but members of one family," as one of our hymns states, then we need to relearn some civility.—Ed. 

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McPherson, Kansas  
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**Bethany Theological Seminary**

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