

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2006 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



The church's call to urban **ministry**



NATIONAL OLDER ADULT CONFERENCE • SONG OF SONGS • 'OUR ENDANGERED VALUES'

You Walked With Us *and our lives are changed*

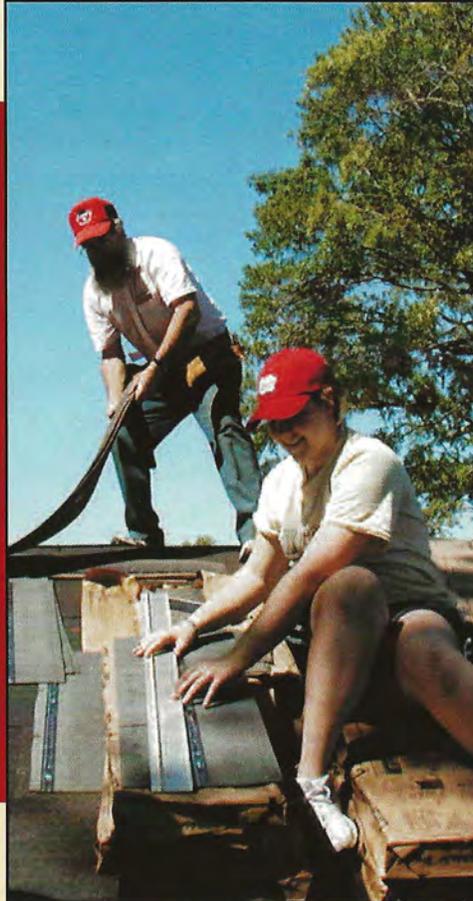
I was scared...
and you
gave me comfort



A gentle hug and lots of love from Disaster Child Care volunteers comforted child survivors of hurricanes and evacuees from the recent violence in Lebanon.

Photo by Patricia Henry

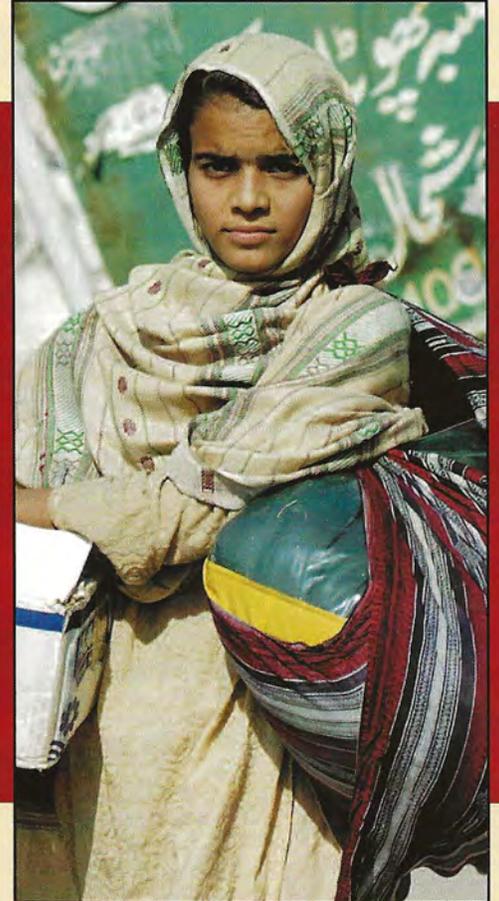
My home was destroyed...
and you
gave me shelter



Lucedale, MS - Brethren volunteers were quick to repair this home damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

Photo by Lutricia Zerfing

I was hungry...
and you
gave me food



Pakistan - Emergency food supplies and temporary housing continue to be distributed to Pakistani earthquake survivors.

Photo by Paul Jeffrey of ACT International

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Church
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MESSENGER

Editor: **Walt Wiltschek** Publisher: **Wendy McFadden** Associate Editor/News: **Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**
Promotions: **Beth Burnette** Subscriptions: **Diane Stroyeck** Design: **The Concept Mill**



ONTHECOVER

“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” The prophet Jeremiah related those words to the children of Israel after they were carried into exile (Jer. 29:7 NIV). The Church of the Brethren has traditionally been a rural-oriented denomination, but how do we seek the peace and prosperity of our growing cities today?

8 The church’s call to urban ministry

Three stories this month look at the opportunities for witness amid skyscrapers and city centers. The first suggests that where one chooses to live can be a ministry in itself (p. 8); a second examines the “New Urbanism” movement and its potential for churches (p. 10); and a third looks at Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren’s attempt to be faithful to its call in a downtown location (p. 12).

15 Speaking truth to power

November brings Election Day, and thoughts about how Christians interact with our nation’s political circles. Tom Wagner offers some reflections on our place in the polling place.

16 Shiny, happy people: National Older Adult Conference

About 1,100 “seasoned servants” from the Church of the Brethren gathered in western North Carolina in early September. There they found laughter, friends, challenge, and a call to “Walk in the Light.”

18 Song of Songs: The art of love

Some Brethren may blush when they come to this book of love poetry tucked in the midst of the Hebrew scriptures. Christina Bucher digs deeper, suggesting that both literal and symbolic readings of the book can bring rich results.

DEPARTMENTS

2	From the Publisher	25	Youth Life
3	In Touch	26	Media Review
6	Reflections	27	Letters
7	The Buzz	31	Turning Points
20	News	32	Editorial

When Annual Conference was last in California, our family took the opportunity to take a driving trip north. Along the way we stopped by the towns where I had grown up. I was a little disappointed to discover that my grade school had simply vanished, swallowed up by houses, and the charmingly named Mango Junior High School had been renamed the unremarkable Sunnyvale Middle School.

I don't think about middle school very often, but I did when I opened the newspaper recently and read that a junior high classmate of mine had just won the Nobel Prize in medicine. I remembered him primarily as the kid who played cello next to me. He did have all the characteristics then of someone who was smart enough in math and science to not fit in very well socially, and it wouldn't surprise me if we predicted that he'd grow up to be a major research scientist (which is not a compliment in seventh grade).



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Still, it was amazing to read that he has indeed made a name for himself. I can add another personality to the parlor game "Greatness I Have Touched," in which people sit around recalling their brushes with the famous. I also felt a touch of midlife regret, as I thought of the many things I haven't accomplished, including Nobel Prizes.

Back in junior high school I was interested in science too; I was thinking of becoming a doctor. But later I realized I had no good reason for this idea. It was simply the most challenging profession I could think of. The work that later found me had to do with words, not formulas.

Actually, after a little thought I realized that I'm not plagued with regret. My true calling is to do the kind of thing I'm doing now. "One dwells with God by being faithful to one's nature. One crosses God by trying to be something one is not," observes Quaker writer and teacher Parker Palmer in *Let Your Life Speak*.

Vocation is rooted in the Latin for "voice," Palmer points out. "Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am."

One of the great gifts the church can offer is the opportunity for people to seek their calling. Through Sunday school, summer camp, Brethren Volunteer Service, the Brethren Academy and in countless other ways we can help people—especially our young people—discover what they are hearing when they listen to their own true selves. Perhaps that is possible for our congregations as well, and even our denomination. Very few of us will earn worldly acclaim. But all of us can receive God's gift of vocation.

Wendy McFadden

HOW TO REACH US

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

dstroyeck_gb@brethren.org
Phone: 847-742-5100
Fax: 847-742-6103

Advertising:

messengerads_gb@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039
Fax: 847-742-1407

Editorial:

messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 263
Fax: 847-742-6103

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VBS ecumenism in Polo

As Joyce Person, pastor of Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, sat at her piano, her church's sanctuary reverberated with the cheers of more than 200 children of all ages. The kids had come from 13 churches in a town with less than 3,000 residents to hear a uniquely delivered gospel message. Doctrinal differences—if there were any amidst the youthful congregation—were dissolved into the laughter and zealous applause elicited by the antics performed on the "altar."



Bob Schwarz

Children from various churches in Polo enjoy the program of the community's Vacation Bible School.

The Polo Community Vacation Bible School, now in its 20th year, is the payoff of more than 30 years of give-and-take of the Polo Community Council of Churches. But more impressive to Nancy Taylor, the VBS chairwoman, were the 45 VBS grads who, two weeks later, approached their vari-

ous pastors to talk about God and salvation. "A lot of these kids don't go to church but claim affiliation," says Taylor, mother of two and member of the host Brethren congregation.

With puppets, humor, and his own brand of "Gospel Magic," "Uncle" Tim Marsh wove in biblical stories, moral exhortations, and religious songs that left the kids chanting their approval as if at a homecoming football game. "It's a gift the Lord gave me," Marsh says. "You would not believe the stories that come back to me about how lives have been changed. Kids get saved and then eventually they influence their parents to the point where the parents start going to church."

"Tim keeps their attention," says Taylor, who teaches first- and second-grade classes during the public school year. "He has a way of relating with the kids."

What keeps ecumenism well and alive in Polo, according to Monte Cox, pastor of the town's Church of the Open Bible, is the weekly, one-hour meeting of pastors, who come together for fellowship and to share and pray about their various needs and frustrations.

Polo church denominations represented at the VBS were Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Community Church, United Methodist, Catholic, Lutheran, Christian Church, and Church of the Open Bible.—**Bob Schwarz**

Bob Schwarz is a retired newspaper editor and former manager of leadership development for Lions Clubs International. He currently writes for Christian publications, leads workshops, and manages Encounters with Life, a ministry of slide show documentaries and travelogues for senior citizens and nursing home residents. He and his wife, Mary Alice, an art teacher, live in Arlington Heights, Ill.

NORTHEAST Camp Harmony in Hooversville, Pa., held its 24th annual Brethren Heritage Festival on Sept. 16. The event, co-sponsored by Western Pennsylvania District, featured meals, booths, entertainment, sales of collectibles and antiques, quilt and basket auctions, a pastor's bake-off, a pie-eating contest, and children's activities.

SOUTHEAST The Virginia District board has approved a project proposal for the Lake Side Church, a new church plant to be located in Bedford County, Va. Over the summer, two Hispanic/Latino new church project proposals were also approved. . . . The New Vision Church of the Carolinas in Calabash, N.C., was officially dissolved. The final service was held Sept. 17.

MIDWEST Peggy Gish, a Church of the Brethren member who has been working in Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams, spoke at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., on Sept. 16. Children made "peace pinwheels" to place on the church lawn as a witness for the International Day of Prayer for Peace.

OZARKS/PLAINS Northern Plains held a "Living, Loving, Learning Together" event Oct. 6-7 at Camp Pine Lake to dialogue about differences over the authority of the Bible, sexuality issues, and other topics. Bethany Theological Seminary faculty member Jeff Bach provided leadership for the sessions, and Paul Roth and Carol Waggy served as mediators.

WEST Pacific Southwest District has called Carrie Cesar as director of missions. She will work with congregations on mission and revitalization and will develop leadership training materials in Spanish. Several new church plants have already begun in the district this year.



Coffee took center stage at this year's Camp Bethel Brethren Heritage Day in Fincastle, Va. Eleven congregations served the brew from their booths, and attendees were invited to vote by e-mail for their favorite. What beverage would you say is most emblematic of the Church of the Brethren, and why? Send your response to MESSENGER at messenger@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. **Selected responses will appear in a future issue.**

BY THE NUMBERS

901

Number of school and health kits assembled by participants at this year's National Older Adult Conference

E-town pays its pastor— to stay away from church

Fresh from a two-year stint as Brazil representative for the General Board, but still three months away from his start as pastor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Greg Davidson Laszakovits wondered what he might do both to keep himself busy and his two daughters in diapers.

"I considered everything from an interim pastorate to sharpen my parish ministry skills, to picking up work as a day laborer to earn some cash," Laszakovits said.

At the same time, the Elizabethtown congregation was mulling how they would handle the transition. Their current pastor, Ralph Detrick, was to conclude his ministry with the congregation and retire. How could they be welcoming and supportive of the incoming pastor, yet stay focused on honoring and celebrating Detrick's lifetime of ministry? It was partly a boundaries issue, says moderator Don Kraybill.

"Our lay leadership team worked hard to establish clear boundaries during the orientation time for both the new and retiring pastors and members of the congregation to avoid interference and confusion of roles," Kraybill said. "Our new pastor, for example, was urged not to be in the church facilities, and members were advised to take pastoral concerns to the retiring pastor, not the new one."

In the end, Laszakovits ended up neither with an interim post nor as a day



Crash course: The senior high youth and men of Lanark (Ill.) Church of the Brethren built a demo car to be entered in the Carroll County Fair Demolition Derby Aug. 12, converting a 1989 Buick Regal over a period of six weeks. Senior high youth group member Cody Kruse was the driver for the derby. Lanark pastor John Sgro said the church was using the project as a form of outreach and fellowship. "Who said church couldn't be fun!" he said. Pictured, left to right, are Jon Kennedy, Sgro, Roger Kruse, Cody Kruse, and Cameron Kruse.

laborer—instead, he was offered a creative solution. The congregation would pay him half-time and cover his family's health insurance needs during an orientation period. He was expected to be busy and productive, just not in the life of the congregation. He would attend area churches (Brethren and otherwise), learn to know the hospitals and social services in the area, attend Annual Conference, ride the bus to National Youth Conference with the youth, and study and prepare for parish ministry and those first few hectic weeks of any

pastorate. It also gave the Davidson Laszakovits family time to buy a house and move in at a sane pace and get used to speaking English full-time again.

"It showed us that the congregation really cared about us as a family and our transition. And in turn, the congregation is getting a healthier pastor," says Laszakovits. "Now that I am here full-time, we have really hit the ground running."

Oakland's big effort serves Old German Baptist Brethren

Oakland Church of the Brethren (Gettysburg, Ohio) served meals for the Old German Baptist Brethren Annual Meeting held on a farm near Union City, Ohio, June 3-6. It marked the 11th time Oakland has taken on this project.

The effort requires many individuals to help in a variety of ways, both in preparation and on-site. Nearly 300 adults and 33 youth from Oakland, plus 20 others from other churches were involved. The steering committee estimated that between 9,000 and 10,000 meals were served during the four days.

The proceeds support a number of areas within the church, as well as outreach projects. Youth, for example, were able to take more than \$5,500 to National Youth Conference for the Global Food Crisis Fund.—Becky Maurer

Becky Maurer

A group of women from Oakland Church of the Brethren, located near Gettysburg, Ohio, help with the massive serving effort for the Old German Baptist Brethren Annual Meeting.



**Anti-violence mural notes
Brethren contributions**

Two leaders of Brethren Community Ministries in Harrisburg, Pa., were incorporated in an anti-violence mural in the city's South Allison Hill neighborhood. The faces of Todd Abney, the first youth to complete a conflict resolution training program, and Gerald W. Rhoades, director of Brethren Community Ministries, were included in the artwork.

They were among 30 community leaders chosen for inclusion by neighborhood residents, culminating a 10-week process.

Three college students—Miriam Rubin, Elody Gyekis, and Stasy Panova—led the process and guided the painting of the mural. They outlined the mural on 5-foot-square sheets of parachute paper that neighborhood children and youth groups filled with the correct colors of paint. The sheets were painted in the Danzante Hispanic Cultural arts studio.

The artists then finished up the painting and applied the sheets to the wall of a neighborhood building so that it looks as if it were painted there. The mural was unveiled on Aug. 1 with an ice cream social. This mural was a part of the federal Project Safe Neighborhoods. Funding came from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development with assistance from the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, and the Community Action Commission of Allison Hill.—**Gerald Rhoades**



Happy anniversary: South Waterloo (Iowa) Church of the Brethren celebrated its 150th anniversary this year with a variety of events. A series of historical skits was presented during worship; a float titled "Serving Christ for 150 years: Simply, Peacefully, Together" was entered in the "My Waterloo Days" Parade on June 2; and the church held a homecoming weekend on July 23. Two special worship services were planned for September and November. Above, members of the church ride the South Waterloo float in the parade.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- **Tom Benevento**, Latin America/Caribbean specialist for the General Board, was profiled in a July Associated Press feature. The article was on Benevento's "Chain Reaction" ministry in Goshen, Ind., which refurbishes old bikes for the homeless.
- Manassas (Va.) pastor **Jeff Carter** received the Volunteer of the Quarter award from Prince William County in June for his work as a chaplain for the county fire and rescue department.
- **Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren** (Bridgewater, Va.) is celebrating its 200th anniversary this fall. The congregation was featured in the Sept. 9 edition of the *Daily News-Record* of Harrisonburg, Va.

CALL FOR PAPERS

**HONORING A LEGACY,
EMBRACING A FUTURE**

THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF BRETHREN HERITAGE

October 11–13, 2007

This conference—part of a series of tricentennial events celebrating the rich 300-year heritage of the Brethren movement—will focus on the historical development and cultural life of the Church of the Brethren and related groups. Proposals for papers, or entire sessions, may relate to any aspect of the Brethren experience in North America or abroad. The conference planners welcome proposals from all academic disciplines as well as from practitioners in ministry.

PROPOSAL FORMAT: For each paper or session proposal, provide a title, a one-page abstract of 150 to 200 words, and a one-page resume with full contact information.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: December 31, 2006

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A feast of cultures

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. In the first year of our marriage, Karen and I decided to carve out Thanksgiving as our own holiday. As young newlyweds we lived in the same part of town where we grew up, so we enjoyed many benefits from having our extended family nearby. But this closeness also brought with it lots of expectations about where and how we would celebrate holidays.

Even before our first Thanksgiving we were getting competing invitations for Christmas. Realizing that Thanksgiving invitations would also be coming, we decided to act preemptively by issuing our own invitations. We explained to both sides of the family that we would be celebrating Thanksgiving in our own home. Having our own Thanksgiving signified our identity as a nuclear family.



WAYNE SUTTON

Karen is a great cook who knows how to fill a house with good smells. On Thanksgiving Day she puts us all to work. I especially enjoy peeling the potatoes and the apples. It's become

one of my traditional duties. There is something deeply satisfying about our whole family working together in preparation for a great feast. Domestic harmony just seems to come easy on Thanksgiving Day. Who wants to spoil such a feast by bringing the residue of arguments to the table?

The power of culture is formidable. It is something we will have to get beyond if we are to become a multi-ethnic church. But culture is such an unavoidable part of being human that we cannot simply discard it.

There are always people around who have no family in town to celebrate with, so it has become our tradition to invite some of these friends to our Thanksgiving table. We usually have around 20 people, and our guests always seem to include friends from other cultures and countries. This multiculturalism is not something we planned. It's just who happens to be in our lives because of where we live. But I confess that I do love it when we get to introduce this uniquely American holiday to newcomers. For me it represents the best of American values: neighborly generosity, gratitude, humility. It has that wonderful story of the Indians (Native Americans) coming to the aid of the Pilgrims and transcending what must have seemed like *huge* cultural differences to share in a prayer of thanksgiving and the intimate fellowship of a meal together.

The guests who grace our table often contribute some favorite thing of their own to the meal, so every year our menu varies a little. There is always way too much food, and I always get way too full trying to taste every delicacy the table has to offer. We began one recent meal with a reading from the Psalms and a prayer of thanksgiving. We had a wonderful

time of fellowship with English, Spanish, and Portuguese being spoken around the table. When it was time for dessert, Karen asked who would like flan and who would like apple pie. Some guests chose both.

It's remarkable how readily this American quasi-religious holiday is embraced by newcomers, regardless of religious or cultural heritage. Gratitude seems to be one of those universal human values that just about every culture "gets." Thanksgiving is an easy way for new immigrants to connect with the culture of their new homeland. But they also seem to make it their own. An Italian friend once told me his family always had pasta with the turkey. My Puerto Rican sister-in-law stuffs her turkeys with *picadillo* (loose ground beef mixed with olives, raisins and onions and highly seasoned).

The paradox of culture is that it has the power either to unite or divide people. Culture is something people have to do together. It's about the kind of society we want to be and the values we hold dear. Culture is also something deeply personal. It is a part of what signifies the identity of a person or family. Although sometimes we may feel embarrassed by some aspect, for the most part just about everyone is proud of their native culture. That's why I enjoy it so much when someone has their first Thanksgiving celebration at our house. We all like to introduce others to the good things about our home culture, because in a way that "goodness" reflects on us. Most of us also like to get a taste of what unfamiliar cultures have to offer. But no one wants to feel like someone else's culture is being

imposed on them.

When this happens, we take it personally, and walls go up.

The power of culture to divide is formidable.

It is something we will have to get beyond if we are to become a multi-ethnic church. But culture is such an unavoidable part of being human that we cannot simply discard it.

It makes me wonder about the culture of that heavenly congregation we glimpse in Revelation 7:9, "out of every nation, tribe, people and tongue." What sort of culture will it be? How will it come about? The thing that brings this prophetic picture together is the common focal point of the congregation's worship: the Lamb. Ultimately every culture will bend its knee before the Lamb of God.

So both now and in the end, it is Jesus who is our unity. Jesus tears down the dividing walls of separation. Through a glass darkened by time and place, and most certainly by culture, I cannot see much more than this about the culture of heaven: that God and the Lamb will be at its core. Still, when we all come to take our seats at the wedding feast of the Lamb, I suspect that every "nation, tribe, people, and tongue" will bring some special thing to the table. **W**

Wayne Sutton is a member of Miami (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren.



QUOTEWORTHY

“There are many people who are willing to die for war. There must be more people who are willing to die for peace.”

—former Christian Peacemaker Teams member Tom Fox, who was killed in March 2006 in Iraq. His words were recalled by former Mennonite Central Committee worker Lisa Shirch, writing in *Crossroads* magazine.

“It turned out that we had not doubted Christ, but we had come to doubt what the North American church had made Christ out to be or not be, and what it had made the Bible out to be or not be. We doubted the spiritual relevance of the church’s focus on issues. We surprised one another in discovering that we constantly disagreed with both sides of every polarizing issue currently before the church.”

—Paul Grout, writing in the “A Place Apart” newsletter. Grout was reflecting on a series of retreats held in connection with the Brethren monastic communion effort.

“I think a great message set to simple music is a piece of portable theology. Hardly any of us remember the sermons we have heard. But songs, time and time again, have gone with people to the bathtub, the coal mines, wherever they went, and made a difference.”

—Christian songwriter Gloria Gaither, quoted by *Charisma* magazine (RNS)

“I am a woman of prayer, and I believe there is power in prayer. I know the Brethren are praying people.”

—Belita Mitchell, 2007 Annual Conference moderator, addressing the National Older Adult Conference

“It is a moral issue that needs immediate resolution.”

—Burton Buller, president of Mennonite Media, on the issue of hunger. Mennonite Media and the NCC recently produced a TV documentary on the issue.

CULTUREVIEW

• A study from Duke University found that **Americans “are more socially isolated** than they were 20 years ago, separated by work, commuting and the single life,” according to a Reuters report. Nearly 25 percent of the people surveyed said they had “zero” close friends with whom to discuss personal matters. More than 50 percent named two or fewer confidants, most often immediate family members, the researchers said. “This is a big social change, and it indicates something that’s not good for our society,” Duke professor Lynn Smith-Lovin said in the report.

• For the first time since the 1930s, the **US membership of the United Methodist Church has dropped** to just under 8 million. A preliminary report from the denomination’s General Council on Finance and Administration, released June 21, shows that total US membership dropped to

7,989,875 (down 1.05 percent) in 2005. The final statistical report will be completed this fall. (United Methodist News Service)

• More than 2,000 communities across the US participated in 1,708 **Church World Service CROP Walks** in 2005. Over the past 20 years, CROP walkers have raised more than \$270 million.

• A **new TV documentary** presented by the National Council of Churches USA, “Hunger No More: Faces Behind the Facts,” looks at the persistent problem of hunger in the 21st century and offers solutions. It became available to NBC television network affiliates Sept. 10. Several other programs produced by the NCC and member churches were to be made available this fall, including “Making Poverty Housing History,” to be aired on NBC on Dec. 10.



JUST FOR FUN: WORD FIND

THE BIG CITY In the puzzle below, find the names of these 13 major US cities that have a Brethren presence. Answers can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and backwards: CHARLOTTE, CHICAGO, CLEVELAND, DENVER, DETROIT, KANSAS CITY, LOS ANGELES, MIAMI, NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA, PHOENIX, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

P	C	Y	T	I	C	S	A	S	N	A	K
H	H	L	O	S	A	N	G	E	L	E	S
W	U	I	R	S	C	H	O	F	C	N	E
A	T	H	L	E	E	D	B	L	R	E	T
S	E	T	H	A	E	R	E	R	E	W	T
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N	N	P	X	D	E	N	V	E	R	M	A

Choose a neighborhood that needs you

The rewards of living in a place with problems

by Fletcher Farrar

We watch out for each other in our neighborhood, so it wasn't unusual that I would get a call that a bunch of homeless guys were hanging out behind an abandoned house slated for rehab.

My caller said they were drinking and leaving piles of trash. I drove my truck down there and found a group of men drinking beer, sharing a 40-ouncer around the circle. I told them we're trying to clean up the neighborhood, make it a better place for everybody, and we need their help. A few staggered away, but several men stayed behind to become a work crew of sorts, helping me load my pickup with empty beer bottles and old tires. As we parted they said they'd keep an eye on the place for me, to make sure nobody trashes it up.

A low-income neighborhood is a story a minute. You have to be a character to live here, so you meet lots of characters. A prostitute has an uncharacteristic bounce to her strut as she

works our street the other morning. I ask her to leave and she tells me it's her birthday, she's 28. Congratulations, Lawanda, I say, and how about taking your birthday off work, while I go call the police? Okay, okay, I'm leaving!

Too many of my Christian friends who can choose where they live get timid when they make that choice. They are adventurous in other areas of their lives and faith. They give generously at church and volunteer to serve at the homeless shelter. But when it comes time to make the biggest economic investment of their lives—buying a home—they go conventional. Even those who choose to rent are deciding where they'll spend the largest chunk of their time.

Rather than go where they're needed, to become part of the solution, they end up living in boring, white subdivisions on the sprawling edge of town, where they'll find no history, no trees, and no problems. Problems—from crime, to bad sidewalks, to a poverty-troubled school—bring neighbors together to unite in common cause. I never knew my neighbors in the "better" neighborhood where I used to live. By necessity, I know my neighbors now.

It is so ingrained in our culture for neighborhoods to be segregated by income, class, and race, that many of us for-

get to challenge the real-estate system. Yet it's easily done. Next time you go looking for a house or an apartment, listen carefully for what parts of town your broker fails to mention. In my town they'll ask if you want to live west, southwest, or south. Just say you'd like to look at houses on the north or east sides. You may get a wide-eyed stare at first, but chances are you'll also find twice the house for half the price by looking "on the other side of the tracks." Once you settle in you'll also find people much like you, trying to take care of their families and their homes, grateful that you got the house instead of some slumlord or drug dealer. They'll value your help, too, as another set of eyes and ears, a person to

Rather than go where they're needed, to become part of the solution, they end up living in boring, white subdivisions on the sprawling edge of town, where they'll find no history, no trees, and no problems.

call the police rather than one being called about.

What about the schools? Some say they would be more willing to risk living in a marginal neighborhood were it not for their children. They aren't willing to risk their children's education by sending them to inner-city schools, where society's problems are concentrated. I know parents who say their kids learn just fine going to school with kids in poverty, and the street knowledge they pick up outside the classroom is invaluable. Parents may need to be more involved in a school with low test scores than they would in a rich white school. But that, too, can be a blessing. There are few things more worthwhile and rewarding than volunteering in a needy school in your own neighborhood.

Neighborhood work has plenty of rewards, but it is work. Some days are more challenging than others. I was in my driveway one Saturday last summer, shoveling dirt from a pile into a wheelbarrow to fill holes in my yard. There's a lot of foot-traffic on our street, and it seemed like everybody who walked by wanted to say something to me related to their neediness.

One guy wanted to borrow \$20 until he started his new job on Monday, then he'd pay me back. At first I thought he didn't realize I was the same one who'd loaned him \$20 a



Fletcher Farrar (original painting)



week ago when he'd run out of gas, and he never came back. Until now. Then, as I talked to him this second time, it occurred to me that he did realize I was the same guy. He said he'd pay me back \$40 when he started his new job on Monday. I'm a fool, but not that much of a fool. I invited him to get lost, and went back to shoveling dirt.

Soon another guy came by on his bicycle, a scruffy old guy with a white beard. I tried to avoid eye contact, but he spoke to me anyway: "Do you have any . . .?" "No," I barked. "I don't have any money." "I was going to ask if you have any work." I tried to soften. "Not right now," I said.

I just wanted to be left alone. But after I rebuffed still another man asking for work, I became worried about my attitude. Am I being Christian here? I don't like it that these people assume I'm rich, but, relatively speaking, I am. I do care about the poor, even though they get on my nerves sometimes. As I shoveled more dirt, I thought, you know, I really could use some help. So I told God then and there, that if he'd send one more person by to ask for a job, I'd put him to work.

It wasn't long. "Let me do that for you. I'm your man." I told him he was hired. "Let me go home and change clothes,

and I'll be back in 30 minutes." As I waited, I thought how pleasing it was to be able to get right with God and stop shoveling dirt all at the same time. I waited. And waited. He never came back. I think God had a laugh that day.

The Bible is full of stories of God's people being rewarded when they take risks to move into new neighborhoods, just outside their comfort zones. On faith Abram left his father's house for the land of Canaan. Moses led the Israelites to an unfamiliar land that, according to spies, "devours its inhabitants." Even God moved. The angels in heaven must have given him a hard time when he made the unconventional decision to become human and go live on earth, a bad neighborhood if ever there was one.

Though it was challenging, Jesus' life among people with needs brought its own rewards in the friends he made and the love he shared. If he had stayed safe in heaven he wouldn't have gotten to know Peter and Andrew, or Mary and Martha, or Lazarus. Or you and me.

Fletcher Farrar is a member of First Church of the Brethren, Springfield, Ill., and a former editor of MESSENGER. He has lived in the Enos Park neighborhood of Springfield for the past 16 years.

'New Urbanism': An antidote to isolation?

Eric Jacobsen speaks passionately about things like sidewalks and storefronts. But he's not an architect or developer. He's a Presbyterian pastor.

As Jacobsen sees it, city planning has an important influence on religious experience. He is an advocate for New Urbanism, the architecture movement that calls for interdependence among residents, with neighborhoods where shops and homes coexist, streets that are pedestrian-friendly, and parks that are gathering places for residents.

New Urbanism has become a mantra for people interested in restoring urban centers and reconfiguring suburban sprawl. Its designs have sprouted across the country, from new towns like Seaside, Fla., to redevelopment in existing places like Gaithersburg, Md., or West Palm Beach, Fla. The Congress for the New Urbanism started small 13 years ago and now has more than 2,300 architects, developers, plan-

ners, and urban designers. include the 10,500 churches in the Willow Creek Association, which links smaller congregations that share the megachurch's philosophy of ministry.

Jacobsen was associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Missoula, Mont., when he became interested in urban design. He wrote the book *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: New Urbanism and the Christian Faith*, and is now earning a Ph.D. in theology of the built environment at Fuller Theological Seminary, one of the largest seminaries in the country.

On a recent weekday, Jacobsen wore a blue dress shirt and tucked the cuff of his gray slacks into his sock, so it wouldn't snag the chain of his bicycle. He rode to the Zona Rosa Caffè: a cozy coffee house located a half block from Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., where the sun-drenched city holds its annual New Year's Day parade.

Over a cup of coffee, Jacobsen extolled the virtues of the

location, which bustled with passers-by. The shop's entrance abuts the wide sidewalk instead of being separated from it by a

Across the country, influential Christians are thinking theologically about urban design and applying its principles to the church. They advocate for New Urbanist concepts because they force people to share with one another, dwell among their neighbors, and allow for a healthy exchange of ideas.

ners, and urban designers.

Now Christian leaders are adopting the movement. They say the philosophy behind New Urbanism is a possible antidote to the isolation experienced by many churches and Christians. Across the country, influential Christians are thinking theologically about urban design and applying its principles to the church. They advocate for New Urbanist concepts because they force people to share with one another, dwell among their neighbors, and allow for a healthy exchange of ideas.

The national advocates for New Urbanism include Randy Frazee, a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, a trend-setting Illinois megachurch attended by more than 20,000 people. Frazee says there's a "movement brewing" where Christians are striving to capture the values of New Urbanism because of an urgent need.

Frazee compared megachurches to castles surrounded by moats. A few times a year the drawbridge is lowered to let people in, where they become a subculture separate from the outside world. They become so involved in church life that they are not involved in their neighborhoods, he said.

"You have to disengage from your community to be involved in the church," Frazee said, describing the problem. "Now the church has become irrelevant to the community."

Willow Creek is a laboratory for new ideas in the evangelical world. Frazee said the push for New Urbanism will

include the 10,500 churches in the Willow Creek Association, which links smaller congregations that share the megachurch's philosophy of ministry. parking lot. And only a pedestrian could appreciate the stained glass artistry of a neighboring building, he said. Someone in a car would miss its beauty.

Jacobsen said places like Zona Rosa might make an ideal "third place," the term New Urbanists use for a location where a person spends time that is not his home or place of employment. The third place is an important part of a community, he said. It's where people from diverse backgrounds learn to interact.

For Christians, the third place also provides opportunity for spontaneous ministry, he said. Jesus did much of his ministry in the context of everyday life. Jacobsen notes that in one Bible story Jesus was on his way to heal the daughter of a synagogue ruler named Jairus, when a sick woman touched his cloak and was healed.

Today's ministers may not have noticed the sick woman because their ministry is too structured, Jacobsen said. "She's not going to call for an appointment," he said.

Christians must see their ministry "as not just supporting the programs inside your church but also caring about the whole neighborhood," Jacobsen said.

Christian advocates of New Urbanism are not in the majority. In fact, Jacobsen said many Christians resist or ignore his appeals to architecture and design. But that doesn't dampen his evangelistic fervor. He says part of the challenge is the his-



Some churches are embracing a new way to reach out to neighborhoods



Curt Gibson, director of neighborhood ministries at Lake Avenue Church, an evangelical megachurch in Pasadena, said New Urbanism is a hot term in the world of Christian community development.

Several years ago a survey found that few children in the youth programs were from the low-income neighborhood surrounding Lake Avenue's church campus. Instead, the children were mostly white-collar types who arrived and departed by the carload from nearby cities. Most attended private schools. The smallest group of students was from the struggling Pasadena Unified School District.

The church poured resources into the Lake Avenue Community Foundation, which expanded its neigh-

borhood outreach and tutoring programs. Now, Pasadena Unified has the largest representation of any district in the youth program, Gibson said.

"There's been a heart change at Lake Avenue," Gibson said. "A subtle transition has happened where they recognize they need to be an active participant in the local community."

torical propensity of Protestants to dismiss architecture. The saying is that "The church is the people, not the building." "That slogan obscures the fact that the building influences how people relate," Jacobsen said.

Christian advocates of New Urbanism cite suburban sprawl as an isolating factor for many churches. The sprawl began in part because of federal subsidies after World War II, said Philip Bess, professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame. Bess, who has a master's degree in church history, is a Catholic and New Urbanist. The low-interest housing loans the government provided GI's returning from the war applied only to new houses. Meanwhile, the government was funding the interstate highway system; zoning laws separated communities into their commercial, industrial, and residential uses.

The suburbs were born, neatly dividing people by economic class and forcing them to drive everywhere—to the market, to work, and to church.

Churches followed people into the suburbs. Bess said they also adapted suburban development patterns, buying sizable plots of land, erecting a church, and surrounding it with a surface parking lot. Churches then offered multiple programs to draw members, who drove to the site, leaving neighborhoods behind.

Sprawl makes it more difficult for churches to achieve their objectives, Bess said. For example, anyone who can't operate a vehicle—the young, old, or disabled—are disenfranchised, he said.

"Just as a matter of social justice it's arguably better to make mixed-use, walkable environments," Bess said.

First Presbyterian Church of Spokane, Wash., is another urban church where leaders realized that low-income neighbors were almost absent from the congregation, said Kevin Finch, the church's associate pastor of mission and evangelism.

A few families from the church took the radical step of moving into "Felony Flats," a crime-prone area within a mile of the church. While Felony Flats is a rough neighborhood, Finch said, it also promotes community interaction. There are sidewalks, and the homes face the street. One of the families that moved to the area hung a hammock in front of its house, and the home soon became a gathering spot for neighborhood children, Finch said.

Now the church is planning to form a nonprofit organization to create New Urbanist-style affordable housing throughout the area, Finch said.

"I see some of the principles of New Urbanism as a perfect parallel for what I think the church should be involved in," Finch said. "And not just the church, but anyone with a heart for the city." ■

Marshall Allen is a writer for Religion News Service based in California.

Seeking God's will in the city

Hagerstown congregation searches for ways to connect with community

by Karen Doss Bowman

Three years ago, facing declining membership and struggling to relate to the urban neighborhood surrounding their church, members of Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren began the painstaking process of soul searching—not necessarily for new members, but for revival within the congregation.

Hoping to breathe new life into their ministry and to clarify God's vision for their church, Hagerstown members called upon Jan King and Stan Dueck, of the General Board's Congregational Life Team staff, to guide them through discernment.

"It's like holding up a mirror," King says of the discernment process. "The congregation takes a look at themselves, where they have been historically, where they are now, and where they would like to go." She later adds, "When a congregation enters a discernment process, they're making themselves vulnerable. . . . Some congregations are so private they don't want to face the truth about themselves."

It may sound strange for a congregation to wrestle with God's will. Seems simple, some would say: The mission of the New Testament church is to follow Christ's teachings. But that's not always a clear-cut issue, says Linda Barkdoll, a member of the Hagerstown congregation for about 20 years

While the congregation has remained decidedly Brethren—and still retains life-long members with strong family ties to the church—the neighborhood has changed drastically.

who served on the discernment team.

"What does it really mean [to follow Christ]?" Barkdoll says. "We're an inner-city church, and how do we approach doing that? It's sort of an interpretation. It's easy to say the New Testament is our creed and we just want to follow the

word of Christ. But that means different things to different people."

When the congregation called upon King and Dueck in 2003, members wanted to determine why people attend the congregation and if they were happy to be there. The stated objective was "to see the church come alive again for everyone," King says.

In many ways, the discernment process led by the Congregational Life Team resembles the planning practices of any successful corporation, complete with articulating core values, defining a mission, setting goals and objectives, and examining strengths and weaknesses. Early in the process, the church board appointed a discernment team designed to be representative of all age groups and leadership posts within the congregation. An important task for this group was to interview community leaders, including police officers, school administrators, and day care officials to determine the needs within the neighborhood.

Established in 1884, the Hagerstown church has a long and rich history in the city's downtown neighborhood. While the congregation has remained decidedly Brethren—and still retains life-long members with strong family ties to the church—the neighborhood has changed drastically. Today,

downtown Hagerstown faces the typical problems that plague many American cities: poverty, drug abuse, and crime. A socioeconomically struggling area, it includes large percentages of homeless and unemployed people, and nearly one-half of the households are headed by a single

parent (mostly female).

While the neighborhood was once home to many of Hagerstown's members, today only a handful of the congregation lives in the vicinity. The congregation is facing the challenge of reaching out to its hurting neighbors and trying



The church's call to urban ministry

Courtesy of Brethren Historical Library & Archives



to attract new members to a location where few people would be inclined to scout around for a church.

"It's very different in an urban area where the values of the congregation are so different from the values of the people who live in the neighborhood," King says. "It's an automatic disconnect. So you work with the congregation on ways to break that barrier to make their ministry viable in the community God has them located."

Through the discernment work with King and Dueck, the congregation outlined three major goals, says Hagerstown pastor Ed Poling: to develop passionate spirituality; to share congregational resources through evangelism efforts; and to nurture a closer sense of family within the church.

Poling, a guitarist, wrote a short song incorporating the church's vision statement—"Journeying with Christ; Serving our neighbors; and Uniting at the Master's table"—which serves as a reminder of the congregation's mission and is sung at occasions such as board meetings and church retreats.

To stir further discussions about God's calling for the congregation, Poling developed "The Church Alive" Bible study and prayer program. The six-week series focused on the Beatitudes and generated ideas about ways to meet the

needs of the church body and the church's neighbors.

Barkdoll says the Beatitudes study was "a fabulous success" for the congregation, leading to a greater emphasis on Bible study and community-building through sharing joys and concerns with one another.

One of the most successful outcomes of the discernment process at Hagerstown was the start of an early Sunday morning contemporary worship service about a year ago. While the informal service has not brought in large numbers of new attendees, Barkdoll notes that it has renewed the commitment of members who previously were not attending regularly. Additionally, the service has a worship team that has developed new leadership for the congregation. Poling preaches for both the contemporary and the traditional worship service, which have a combined attendance of about 180.

The congregation has taken on a number of outreach projects with the neighborhood in mind, as well, hoping to get to know local families and minister to their needs. Members regularly provide meals to the downtown homeless shelter, and several years ago the church hosted homeless people overnight before the shelter built its own facility. The church also sponsors monthly Food Pantry Sundays, collecting



The church's call to urban ministry

items for a local food bank. Each summer, the congregation hosts Vacation Bible School, which brings in a significant number of local children, and the congregation has invited community members to a number of fellowship events, including Sunday Popsicle Night and a community yard sale.

Helping out in times of crisis also has allowed the Hagerstown church to serve its neighbors. Two years ago, during the winter months, Poling says, a fire destroyed an apartment building located close to the church. The Hagerstown congregation opened up its parking lot for the fire and rescue team, and burned-out residents were invited to the church for hot meals and to keep warm while they were being interviewed by the Red Cross.

"We're trying to break down the separation between our neighbors and our church," Poling says.

As part of his own ministry, Poling helped to create a local interfaith community ministry following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The neighborhood is ethnically diverse, he says, and it's imperative for Christians to accept and appreciate

other faiths. It's all part of learning to live in a multi-cultural world, he says.

"It helps to broaden the church's perspective, so that while we can have a strong sense of identity as Brethren, there's the realization that we live side-by-side with people of different traditions," Poling says. "We need to know not only that it's all right, but that God may be involved in that, as well."

It helps to broaden the church's perspective, so that while we can have a strong sense of identity as Brethren, there's the realization that we live side-by-side with people of different traditions.

While attracting new members is important, the main focus of the Hagerstown congregation's discernment process has been to find ways to minister to the needs of people within the congregation and those in the

surrounding neighborhood, Barkdoll says.

"The ministry itself is important first; the numbers are second—quality over quantity," Barkdoll says. "It's almost impossible to assess quantitatively the value of the seeds you plant today. . . . We certainly want to grow in numbers, but that's not the only evidence we're being effective in ministry." ❧

Karen Doss Bowman is a freelance writer based in Bridgewater, Va. She is a member of Sunrise Church of the Brethren in Harrisonburg.

URBAN AFFAIRS



• **Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria** (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) has placed a major emphasis on planting urban congregations. A plant in the capital of Abuja is among those started in recent years. Bob Krouse, a recent General Board mission coordinator in Nigeria, said that such congregations are the "growing edge" of the church in Nigeria. Cities in the African nation have been growing, and some projections indicate Lagos, Nigeria, could be the world's largest city by the middle of the next decade.

• Only a handful of **US Church of the Brethren congregations** are in the heart of large cities. Brethren do have a small presence in Brooklyn, N.Y.; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Miami; Los Angeles; and some other smaller cities.

• **Bethany Theological Seminary**

and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (a partnership between Bethany and the Church of the Brethren General Board) have intentionally been adding some courses in urban ministry in the past few years. To date, classes have been offered in southern California, Pittsburgh, Pa., and Campinas, Brazil, connecting students with urban congregations, community-based ministries, and the artistic and cultural gifts of the city

• The **General Board** no longer has a specific staff position overseeing urban ministry as it has at some times in the past, but some of those concerns are now resourced by its Congregational Life Teams (CLTs). An annual Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration, sponsored by the CLTs and an ad-hoc Cross-Cultural Ministry Team, often

addresses some urban issues. The next consultation is scheduled for April 19-22 in New Windsor, Md.

• **Some districts** have particular emphases on urban ministry. Among the most active has been Virlina District, where an Urban Ministry Committee has periodically sponsored workshops, provided worship resources, and published information in the district newsletter.

• A **new initiative in England**, with Anabaptist scholar Stuart Murray Williams among the trainers, is seeking to combine urban mission and church planting. Titled the "Crucible," the course particularly looks at new models of doing church in urban settings, such as "cafe churches," strongly peace-oriented churches, and "new monastic communities." More details are at www.cruciblecourse.net.

Speaking truth to **power**

How do we interact with the political world?



by Tom Wagner

My earliest experiences in a voting booth occurred in a place which made it nearly impossible to ignore my Dunker upbringing. For at least 40 years the registered voters of Butler Township, DeKalb County, Ind., have gathered in the basement of the Cedar Creek Church of the Brethren meetinghouse to cast their ballots.

The congregation was organized in 1855 and has served as the spiritual home for many of my maternal kinfolk over the generations. The white-frame meetinghouse was built in 1885. Though it has undergone some alteration and augmentation over the years, the basic lines of the original 19th-century structure are easily discernable.

Since childhood I have been an occasional visitor, hearing numerous sermons and Sunday school lessons within those walls, and of course, attending many family potlucks in the basement. I have also attended at least one love feast in that basement, seated near the place where the voting machines usually stand. Lines from the liturgy, such as "I have given you an example . . ." and "Do this in remembrance of me" have at times echoed in my thoughts as I have closed the polling-place curtains.

Occasionally I have considered the irony of the context as I have passed the church lawn littered with campaign signs on my way to the basement door. My 16th-century spiritual ancestors were among the first to question the medieval alliance of throne and altar. The choice to follow their consciences rather than the dictates of princes or even city councils on matters of faith subjected them to generations of withering persecution, driving them to the margins of European society.

Migration to Quaker-controlled colonial Pennsylvania offered Mennonites, Dunkers, and other religious dissidents refuge and opportunity for full social and political participation. The grateful refugees used their newly acquired franchise to repeatedly return majorities of their benefactors to the General Assembly.

However, choices became more complicated when Quaker legislators resigned

en masse during the French & Indian War (1755-1763), rather than collaborate with British military policy. The new leadership had little sympathy for "plain people" values and was often openly hostile to ethnic Germans.

What do you do when the entire political spectrum has shifted? Do you compromise and collaborate with elements of the new order, hoping to maintain some influence in a less than perfect world? Do you continue to publicly promote your most deeply held commitments and values, even though it is clear you will always be in the minority? Or, do you simply accept that your beliefs are so out of conformity with the surrounding society that you withdraw entirely and create an alternative community?

While the new defensive measures were at best distasteful, armed rebellion advocated by some of the very same politicians less than a generation later (1775-1783) was incomprehensible. Loyalty oaths, added tax burdens on conscientious objectors, public denunciations, and irregular confiscations further alienated pacifist German sectarians from the new regime. Dunkers in particular withdrew from political participation until the dawn of the 20th century, when the Prohibition movement caught their interest. Even today a few traditionalist Brethren enclaves remain aloof from politics. Though I disagree with their position, I highly respect their consistency.

The Christian faith still has much to offer the ongoing development of social ethics and public policy in a secular pluralist society, without attempting to dominate the process. Indeed, as the Body of Christ we are called to embody God's love in the world. When we live up to this standard, we help build a more tolerant, just, and compassionate society.

Unfortunately, American Christians are particularly susceptible to messianic pretensions. One corrective is self-criticism, or as some might say, confession. Granted, it's much easier to scapegoat our political opponents and other faith traditions for society's ills rather than examining our own role in the mess. We also

need to reexamine New Testament understandings of the role of government, reading in tandem Romans 13 and Revelation 13. These texts balance the legitimate function of government as a restraint on evil in a fallen world and the idolatrous nature of concentrated wealth and power.

Admittedly, I vote for candidates from one of the major parties far more often than the other. I do so with a healthy dose of skepticism. Neither has a monopoly on godliness, despite some claims. Usually my choice is the result of discerning the closest fit to my values among the limited choices of the so called two-party system, especially on state and local levels. More often than not I have voted for third-party candidates in presidential races.

As a pastor I often incorporated campaign issues in sermons prior to an election. Though it would have been inappropriate to endorse particular candidates, these talks proved great opportunities to explore the church's social teachings on issues of the moment. Rational discussion of the issues has a way of reducing the temperature on partisan hype by a few degrees.

The Psalmist helps us keep things in perspective: "Put not your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God" (Psalm 146:3-5).

Tom Wagner is a former pastor in the Church of the Brethren and serves Muskegon County (Mich.) Cooperating Churches as clerk and archivist. A version of this article originally appeared in the Muskegon County Cooperating Churches publication "BRANCHES."

Shiny, happy people

Upbeat NOAC provides opportunities for laughter and luminescence

by Kaysa Meeks

Eddie Edmonds



“Walk in the Light” were the words that challenged us even as we prepared to go to Lake Junaluska, N.C., for the eighth bi-annual National Older Adult Conference (NOAC), sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers.

Throughout the five days in early September, excellent speakers—Kathy Reid, Roland Martinson, David Augsburg, Myron Augsburg, Richard Gentzler, and Mary Cline Detrick—told us that letting our light shine included knowing that our being, who we are, is even more important than the words we speak, and that “elderhood” is a calling, not a time of setting aside. We were reminded that young people want to know these people who walk with God, and again we were challenged to tell our stories.

We were taught that forgiveness is more than just saying the words, “I’m sorry.” We were assured that the mystery of life and faith is okay; we know it works and we don’t have to understand why. We were advised that those 65 and older are rapidly becoming the largest segment of our

population, that by 2030 we will outnumber children and youth, and that two-thirds of everyone who has lived to be 65 or older are alive today. We were challenged to forget the issues that divide us from other Christians and to begin to let our lights burn brightly right along with theirs.

One of the important parts of NOAC is the greeting of friends—both the old ones and the ones you haven’t met yet. No matter how many people you have not met when you go, there are no strangers.

And we laughed! A highlight twice each day was the “Almost Live NOAC News,” starring David Sollenberger, Larry Glick, and Chris Stover-Brown. “A-Mack,” alias Alexander Mack, also showed up in several segments of the news videos as they kept us informed of what was happening and what to see and do in a most humorous way. The organizers of NOAC have certainly found how to get us slow-moving older adults to the auditorium on time for the general sessions! One evening Ted Swartz and Lee Eshleman, Mennonite writers and performers of several

“If we could love each other the way we are called to, this would be a different kind of church.” —Kathy Reid, Monday evening speaker

**“Retirement is no longer an excuse not to lead.”
—Roland Martinson, Tuesday morning speaker**

“The task of forgiveness means to seek to open the door once more wherever it’s possible.” —David Augsburg, Wednesday morning speaker

**“Let us never in our actions or inaction make people wonder if Jesus has left the building!”
—Mary Cline Detrick, Friday morning speaker**

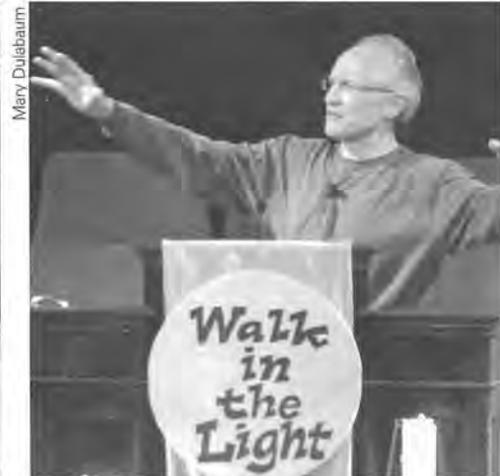
“You have to live with mystery, without pat answers for everything.” —Myron Augsburg, Wednesday evening speaker



Many "assistants" help Bethany Theological Seminary president Gene Roop enjoy an ice cream social.



Laughter was a big part of NOAC, as participants enjoyed various entertaining sessions.



Keynote speaker Roland Martinson inspired the NOAC audience with stories and challenges.

original and very funny productions based on Biblical stories (shown below right), had us laughing as they showed us the human side of some of the people we read about in the Bible.

The angels in heaven must have paused to listen to the beautiful music resonating from the auditorium that week, from Greg Shook's organ playing, to the awesome NOAC choir, to the attendees singing everything from old gospel hymns to modern Christian music. We also got to spend an evening walking down memory lane as Ryan Harrison and Shawn Kirchner led us in songs from the 1930s to the 1960s.

First-time attendees soon figure out that you can't do everything at NOAC; in fact, you can't even do everything you want to do. You have to pick and choose, and sometimes the choices are difficult. There were things going on from 6 a.m., when activities such as devotions, bird watching, or exercising helped you meet the new day, to 10 p.m., when the almost nightly ice cream parties ended.

In between, besides the general sessions, there was a "theological study" led by Dena Pence Frantz. In the afternoon you could choose "interest group" workshops ranging from information on Middle East issues to being good grandparents, to issues on aging, and almost every other issue facing seniors today. If you didn't feel like dealing with issues, you could try making teddy bears, whittling walking sticks,

quilting, painting, or a variety of other crafts, or you could help put together health kits as a service project.

If you needed to be more physical, there was tennis, golf, shuffleboard, horseshoes, or tai chi. One day you could even go with a group to hike on the Appalachian Trail or take a trip to the Cherokee Oconaluftee Indian Village. And sometime between all of this you needed to visit the display area, where various organizations of the Church of the Brethren gave away information, treats, and useful souvenirs, and where

Brethren Press had a well-stocked bookstore. There was even a General Board-sponsored miniature golf course to help with ABC's "Lighten up Brethren" campaign. And you had to take some time to enjoy the beautiful setting, perhaps by taking a 2½-mile walk around the lake.

We were privileged to attend the premiere showing of a documentary telling some of the story of how the Church of the Brethren helped to reconstruct Europe following World War II. I hope the documentary will help us remember who we are and whose we are, and will help create the vision of who we can be in this world of darkness as we continue to "let our lights shine." 

Kaysa Meeks lives in Greenville, Ohio, and is a member of Oakland Church of the Brethren. She led one of the early morning devotion times at National Older Adult Conference.



Nevin Dulabaum

NOAC IN A NUTSHELL

Dates: Sept. 4-8, 2006

Location: Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Attendance: About 1,100

Theme: "Walk in the Light"

Fun facts: Clair Throne, age 98, was the oldest attendee at this year's NOAC. . . .

About 175 people registered for a "REG-NUH" walk that raised nearly \$3,000 for the Global Food Crisis Fund.

Future conferences: The next National Older Adult Conference is scheduled for Sept. 1-5, 2008, back in Lake Junaluska. Another NOAC will be held the following

year, Sept. 7-11, 2009. NOAC will then resume a biennial schedule, but on odd-numbered years, putting it in different years from National Youth Conference (next scheduled for 2010). The 11th NOAC is scheduled for Sept. 5-9, 2011.

Song of Songs: *The art of love*

Book can be read either literally or symbolically

by Christina Bucher

Readers who chance upon this short book, tucked between Ecclesiastes and Isaiah, are often shocked to discover a collection of love poems in the Bible. What do human sexuality and erotic love have to do with religion?

Anyone familiar with the history of Christianity knows of the long tradition of celibacy in the church. During some periods of Christian history, the celibate life was believed to bring one closer to God than could married life. Within the Church of the Brethren today, marriage and sexu-

ality are considered gifts of God; yet, we retain some reticence—and, perhaps even some confusion—about sexuality.

Living in a society that is overly preoccupied with sexuality, we might do well in the church to engage in discussion of the goodness of human sexuality. One approach to the Song of Songs appreciates the book for its delight in God's gift of sexual desire to humans.

Another approach to the Song of Songs is to read the book symbolically. The church historically has not read the Song of Songs as a celebration of human sexuality. Rather, Christian readers through the ages have viewed the book as a symbolic expression of the love between God and humankind.

Before delving into the symbolic approach to the Song of Songs, let's look at the basic elements of the book. The eight chapters of the Song of Songs are loosely interconnected through the use of refrains and themes. It is difficult to find an overarching plot to the book (although some have tried to do so). The book seems to open in the middle of things and to close without a clear sense of an ending. Nevertheless, the themes of "searching for and finding" one's beloved and "expressing admiration for the beloved" provide some sense of cohesiveness to the collection. Refrains function similarly. The expression of admiration "You are beautiful, my love" (with slight variations in the phrasing) occurs at several places in the book (1:15-16; 4:1; 4:7; 6:4). An expression of mutual relationship, "my beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16) recurs with slight variation in 6:3 and 7:10.

With the exception of two verses (8:6-7), all the poems are in the form of speeches. The two main speakers are an unnamed woman and man, who, although in love with each other, are frequently separated. These two main char-



Ephrata Cloister Collection, c. 1750.

acters of the poems are anonymous. They address each other with terms of endearment, such as "my love."

Most of the lines belong to the young man and the young woman; however, we also occasionally hear another voice, which seems to belong to a group. The text refers several times to "the daughters of Jerusalem," and it is this group that may be the third voice. Some interpreters think they play a role similar to that of a Greek chorus in ancient Greek plays. In 6:13, it may be this group that says, "Return, return, O Shulammitte." (Consequently, readers sometimes refer to the woman as the "Shulammitte.")

Although seldom read or studied by church people today, the Song of Songs has had a long history of influence on music and art. Early Anabaptists favored the springtime imagery of Song 2:10-13 and believed these verses described the times in which they lived. Menno Simons read the passage this way, identifying the man as Christ and the woman as the church. For Menno and other early Anabaptists, the springtime imagery of the Song described the time of the Anabaptist flowering as a time of grace and gospel and fruitful faith.

Radical Pietists at the Ephrata community immersed themselves even more

deeply in the language of the Song. Images of lilies and roses are prominent in Ephrata's folk art, calling to mind Song 2:1: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the

from the "best of all songs." "Lo how a rose e'er blooming" and "There is no rose of such virtue" may both allude to the rose mentioned in 2:1. An 18th-cen-

Radical Pietists at the Ephrata community immersed themselves even more deeply in the language of the Song. Images of lilies and roses are prominent in Ephrata's folk art, calling to mind Song 2:1: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys."

valleys." Titles of two of the community's hymn books call to mind imagery in the Song of Songs: "The Song of the Solitary and Deserted Turtle-Dove, namely the Christian Church" alludes to 2:12b, "The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land"; "Zionitic Hill of Incense" alludes to 4:6b: "I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense."

Garden and floral imagery can be seen in early Brethren hymn texts, such as "Come, beloved, come into your garden." The imagery of the beloved's kiss (1:2) can be seen in another early Brethren hymn text: "Do not begrudge me the sweet kisses and delights, nor refuse my kiss of love." Although these two early Brethren hymns have long been removed from our hymn books, Brethren today likely know and sing Christmas carols whose imagery comes

tury song, "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree," can be traced to 2:3: "As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men." In that same century, William Billings composed a lovely anthem that is still sung today, "I am the Rose of Sharon."

How should we read the Song of Songs today? Literally—as a collection of poems that deal with the erotic drive within humans? Or symbolically—as a way of speaking about the human desire to know and be known by God? Both approaches to the Song are fitting, and each has its appropriate context. **WJ**

Christina Bucher is a professor of religion at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

MESSINGER'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 December: Isaiah, by Dawn Wilhelm.

SONG OF SONGS: A CLOSER LOOK

Title: This book is known by three different titles, all taken from the opening verse of chapter 1: "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." Like the phrase "king of kings," "Song of Songs" expresses the superlative. Thus, the title "Song of Songs" means "the best of all songs" or "the most sublime song." The book is also known as "Song of Solomon" and as "Canticles" (from the Latin title of the book).

Key texts: Early Anabaptists and Radical Pietists favored 2:10-11: "My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.'" The only poetic statement about love is found in 8:6-7: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned."

Annual Conference announces theme for 2007 in Cleveland

"Proclaim the Power of God" (Ps. 68:34-35) is the theme for the 221st Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, June 30-July 4, 2007. The theme and accompanying scripture were announced by the Program and Arrangements Committee after its mid-August meeting in Elgin, Ill.

"As we continue our 'Together: Conversations on Being the Church,' I challenge you to join me as we

'Proclaim the Power of God,' " said 2007 moderator Belita D. Mitchell in her statement on the theme. Mitchell is pastor of First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa.

"I believe now is the time for us to become more ethnically diverse, more spiritually alive, and more united to continue the work of Jesus across the United States and around the world," Mitchell said.

"Let us prepare to come together in Cleveland celebrating the power

of God in our midst."

Daily scriptures and expressions of the theme also have been announced. The logo for the Conference has not been designed yet, and will be released after the committee meets again in November.

For the moderator's full statement, the daily scriptures and expressions of the theme, and a Spanish translation, go to www.brethren.org/genbd/newsline/2006/aug3006.htm.

Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 270 begins service

Members of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 270 have begun their terms of service following orientation at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., July 30-Aug. 18. The volunteers, home congregations or hometowns, and placements are as follows:

Front row, from left: Emily O'Donnell, Green Tree Church of the Brethren, Oaks, Pa., to the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, Washington, D.C.; Leah

Akron, Ohio, to Tri-City Homeless Coalition, Fremont, Calif.

Second row: Phil Bohannon, Lampeter (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to Camp Alexander Mack, Milford, Ind.; Nathan Fishman, New Brunswick, N.J., to Jubilee USA Network, Washington, D.C.; Britta Schwab, Faith Community of the Brethren Home Church of the Brethren, New Oxford, Pa., to Gould Farm, Monterey, Mass.; Barbara Tello, Minneapolis, to Chiapas Peace House, Chiapas, Mexico; Amy Waldron, Bloomington, Ind., exploring an assignment in Nigeria with Global Mission Partnerships of the General Board, to an interim assignment at Camp Courageous, Monticello, Iowa. Becky Snavelly, orientation staff.

Third row: Benedikt Reinke, Ahnatal, Germany, to Lancaster (Pa.) Area Habitat for Humanity; Hanae Ikehata, Alzey, Germany, to Su Casa Catholic Worker House, Chicago; Anand Lehmann, Eppelheim, Germany, to Tri-City Homeless Coalition, Fremont, Calif.; Stan Morris, Sacramento, Calif., to AHEAD Energy Project, Rochester, N.Y.; Joe Parkinson, Collinsville, Ill., to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Lawreen McBride, Washington, D.C., not currently taking an assignment. Genelle Wine, orientation staff.

Fourth row: Rachael Weber, Mountain View Church of the Brethren, McGaheysville, Va., to the World Student Christian Federation, Budapest, Hungary; Trevor Myers, Oakland Church of the Brethren, Bradford, Ohio, to Emergency Response/Service Ministries of the General Board, New Windsor, Md.; Reike Flesch, Recklinghause, Germany, to Step 2, Reno, Nev.; Will Morris, Charlottesville (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to the Brethren Nutrition Program, Washington, D.C.; Tim Stauffer, Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, to General Board Information Services, Elgin, Ill.

For more information about BVS, call the office at 800-323-8039, or visit www.brethenvolunteerservice.org.



Yingling, Clover Creek Church of the Brethren, Fredericksburg, Pa., to Emanuel Children's Home, San Pedro Sula, Honduras; Katie O'Donnell, Green Tree Church of the Brethren, to the Church of the Brethren in Brazil. Paula Hoffert, Lewiston (Minn.) Church of the Brethren, to Boys Hope Girls Hope, Lenexa, Kan.; Meredith Morckel, Springfield Church of the Brethren,



The Wall: The "Disaster Wall," in an apartment housing volunteers at a Brethren Disaster Response project in Pensacola, Fla., became a landmark of sorts over the past year. At the center of the wall was a large drawing of a Brethren Disaster Response pickup truck, created by McPherson (Kan.) College student Nick Anderson. All disaster volunteers who worked in Pensacola were invited to sign their names on the wall. The disaster response project in Florida—rebuilding and repairing homes damaged by hurricanes Ivan and Dennis—moved to new quarters in Gulf Breeze over the summer, however, so the landmark wall has been left behind. A poster of the wall has been created by Glenn Riegel, a disaster response volunteer from Little Swatara Church of the Brethren. The 16-by-20-inch posters may be ordered from ersm_gb@brethren.org for \$12 plus shipping and handling.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 3-4 Shenandoah District Conference, Bridgewater, Va.

Nov. 3-5 Illinois/Wisconsin District Conference, Lombard, Ill.

Nov. 5 National Junior High Sunday

Nov. 10-11 Virginia District Conference, Rocky Mount, Va.

Nov. 16-18 Advanced Reconciliation Skills II: Systems Thinking, Anxiety, and Conflict, sponsored by On Earth Peace, Camp Mack, Milford, Ind.

Nov. 17-18 Brethren Benefit Trust Board meeting, Bridgewater, Va.

Nov. 17-19 National Outdoor Ministries Association Conference, Camp Bethel, Fincastle, Va.

Nov. 19 National Donor Sabbath

Dec. 3 Christmas Offering, sponsored by the General Board; **Brethren Press winter curriculum quarter** begins

Council reviews 2006 Conference, elects Ronald Beachley as chair

The Annual Conference Council elected Ron Beachley, immediate past moderator of Annual Conference, to chair the council for the coming year. Beachley presided over the council's meeting Aug. 16-17 at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., according to a report from Conference secretary Fred Swartz.

Significant time was spent reviewing business actions of the 2006 Conference, and identifying agencies or people for follow-up of decisions. The council also heard a report about a request for the five Annual Conference agencies to name representatives to the Program Feasibility Study Committee—the group that will study the "Doing Church Business" recommendations.

In other business, the council studied a report from the Annual Conference marketing ministry team advising the group to look at systemic issues that affect Conference attendance, including diminishing and aging membership, increase in bi-vocational congregational leadership, growing numbers of pastors with little interest in keeping congregations connected with the denomination, and threatening divisions in the denomination.

In a related matter, the council addressed its Conference-assigned responsibility to collaborate with the Standing Committee of district delegates

in envisioning for the denomination. Council members identified several "broad strokes of vision" for the church, including developing missions and mission leaders, including overseas mission, congregational renewal, and new church development; calling vital and loyal Brethren leadership; calling and growing disciples; and nurturing vital worship. These ideas have been conveyed to the envisioning subcommittee of Standing Committee, with the intention that both the subcommittee and council will work at developing strategies, Swartz reported.

The council expressed appreciation to executive director Lerry Fogle and the Annual Conference office assistants for the achievement of many goals in the Conference's strategic plan. The group reviewed the mission, vision, and core values

of the Conference and reaffirmed their validity.

Funding streams for Annual Conference demanded considerable discussion time for the council, as registrations for the 2006 Conference fell considerably below the projected mark, Swartz said. There were more than 100 fewer delegates in 2006 than were hoped for, he said. One of the principal means of support for Annual Conference comes from delegate registration fees. Appreciation was expressed, however, for Conference offerings that amounted to \$47,440 this year.

The council received a report on the move of the Annual Conference office to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., which was completed Aug. 28. The council will meet next Nov. 28-29 at the Brethren Service Center.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



The Annual Conference Council met in August. Members include, from left, Ron Beachley, Jim Myer, Belita Mitchell, Fred Swartz, James Beckwith, and Lerry Fogle.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:

Two Minervas, one passion to serve

Nancy Heishman



Members of the Arco Iris new church plant in the Dominican Republic surround Minerva Mateo, shown standing at center.

Two Dominican Brethren women share a common passion to demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ in their communities. Both lead ministries based in their homes, with the support of the local church. Their ministries were formally accepted in 2005 as new fellowships of Iglesia de los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic).

Both women, interestingly enough, are named Minerva.

Patria Jimenez, who is called Minerva, was cooking in her kitchen one day. As she prepared to add rice to a large pot of *asopao* stew, she felt a strong urging from the Lord to go out into the street because someone needed her. As she prayerfully walked through her neighborhood she found a despondent, desperate man sitting on a bench nearby.

What flowed from her obedient listening to the Spirit is a remarkable story of ministry to a young man who was ready to murder a family member over an unpaid debt. As Minerva began

to counsel and pray with him, God's Spirit moved and he was able to take significant beginning steps toward reconciliation. Minerva returned to her stew with a thankful heart, continuing prayers for his salvation.

This story is typical of Minerva's ministry in a neighborhood of people resettled after Hurricane George devastated the San Juan de la Maguana area in 1998. From

her sturdy, concrete block home she offers love and care in an area plagued by problems such as unemployment and drug and alcohol addictions.

She and pastor Felix Arias Mateo, a member of the San Juan church and a graduate of the Church of the Brethren the-

ological program, offer a worship service every evening to a congregation named "Maranatha." Sometimes as many as 35-40 people fill Minerva's small house, sitting in each room as well as outside, where they can hear the enthusiastic worship by means of a small sound system.

For several years, a request for a plot of land in a desirable part of the community to be donated to the church by the government has been pending. "When it is God's time for us to have this land, it will come," says Felix. "In the meantime, we keep on ministering every day, building the people of God and reaching more souls for Christ."

Almost four hours away in the heart of the nation's capital of Santo Domingo, another Minerva—Minerva Mateo—ministers to her community through a new church plant called "Arco Iris," which means "rainbow." In 2000 Minerva experienced a spiritual renewal and was baptized into Peniel Church of the Brethren. Even before her baptism she offered worship services to the community from her home. Several people were converted, and Minerva had a desire to begin a cell group.

While numbers vary in this transient community, which also is plagued by drug and alcohol problems, there are usually 25-30 people gathered every Friday night under Minerva's carport and on her front porch.

Minerva Mateo dreams of expanding the programming of the congregation, focusing on a Vacation Bible School-type program of activities for younger ages. She especially would like to see recently converted youth receive the discipleship guidance they need to be faithful in a difficult social climate.

Minerva Mateo has a listening heart, sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting. Recently she had to make a work-related visit to a home known for drug-related activity. Determined to follow God boldly and not to succumb to fear, she headed toward the house, all the while praying for God's help. When she arrived, to her surprise she found a group of Christian women outside the house praying for the occupants and the needs of the neighborhood. She made her visit successfully and proclaims with a beaming face, "God is so good!"

Whether in northwest San Juan de la Maguana, or in the nation's capital in the south, the Brethren in the Dominican Republic are carefully listening to the Holy Spirit, enthusiastically sharing the love of Jesus Christ, and celebrating the love of God.—Nancy Heishman

Nancy Heishman is a mission coordinator in the Dominican Republic for the Global Mission Partnerships program of the General Board.



Photo courtesy of Nancy Heishman

Patria Jimenez, left, also called Minerva, sits with Brethren mission coordinator Nancy Heishman.

New Brethren Service Center committee holds first meeting

The Brethren Service Center Ministry Options Exploration Committee held its initial meeting in New Windsor, Md., Aug. 22-24.

The group is a committee of the Church of the Brethren General Board, and was formed following board action in March as it dealt with stewardship of property issues related to use of its main properties in New Windsor and Elgin, Ill.

The committee's charge is "to explore ministry options for ministries related to properties associated with the Brethren Service Center." The group has been asked to recommend an answer to the question, "What will be the best use of the New Windsor property to support, grow, and extend the ministry of the General Board on behalf of the Church of the Brethren?" said chair Dale Minnich in his report from the meeting.

As background for its work, the committee reviewed the history of the Brethren Service Center since the property was purchased by the denomination in 1944, reviewed the recent history of the stewardship property study and subsequent General Board action, toured the facility, and visited with staff. The group discussed reports of the four areas of General Board ministry located at the Brethren Service Center: Service Ministries, Emergency Response, the New Windsor Conference Center, and New Windsor Buildings and Grounds.

The committee also met with two working groups of staff and community members launched by the center's executive director, Roy Winter, in order to generate thinking for the process of the committee's study.

A number of assignments were made both to committee members and to staff, Minnich reported. The assignments will help the committee "flesh out possibilities to strengthen the Brethren Service Center's ministries," his report said. The

group will receive reports of the assignments at its next meeting Nov. 10-12.

Members of the committee are Jim Stokes-Buckles of New York; Kim Stuckey Hissong, Westminster, Md.; David R. Miller, Dayton, Va.; Fran Nyce, Westminster, Md.; Janet Ober, Upland, Calif.; Dale Roth, State College, Pa.; Jack Tevis, Westminster, Md.; and Dale Minnich, General Board representative, Moundridge, Kan. General Board staff who met with the committee throughout its first meeting were general secretary Stan Noffsinger, Winter, and director of financial operations LeAnn Wine.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



The campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., houses the offices and warehouses of a number of programs of Church of the Brethren agencies, as well as the New Windsor Conference Center and offices of ecumenical agencies. Zigler Hall sits at the front of the campus.

Personnel moves

- **Connie R. Burkholder** has resigned as executive minister of Northern Plains District, effective Nov. 15. She has served in the position for 10 years. Burkholder also has pastored churches in Kansas and Ohio. Her denominational responsibilities have included service on the Council of District Executives, volunteer positions on the boards of Western Plains District and Northern Ohio District, and a term as a Brethren representative to the National Council of Churches, 1997-2000. She also is a member of the Ministry Advisory Council.
- **Jim Chinworth**, campus pastor at Manchester College for the past eight years, will join Manchester Church of the

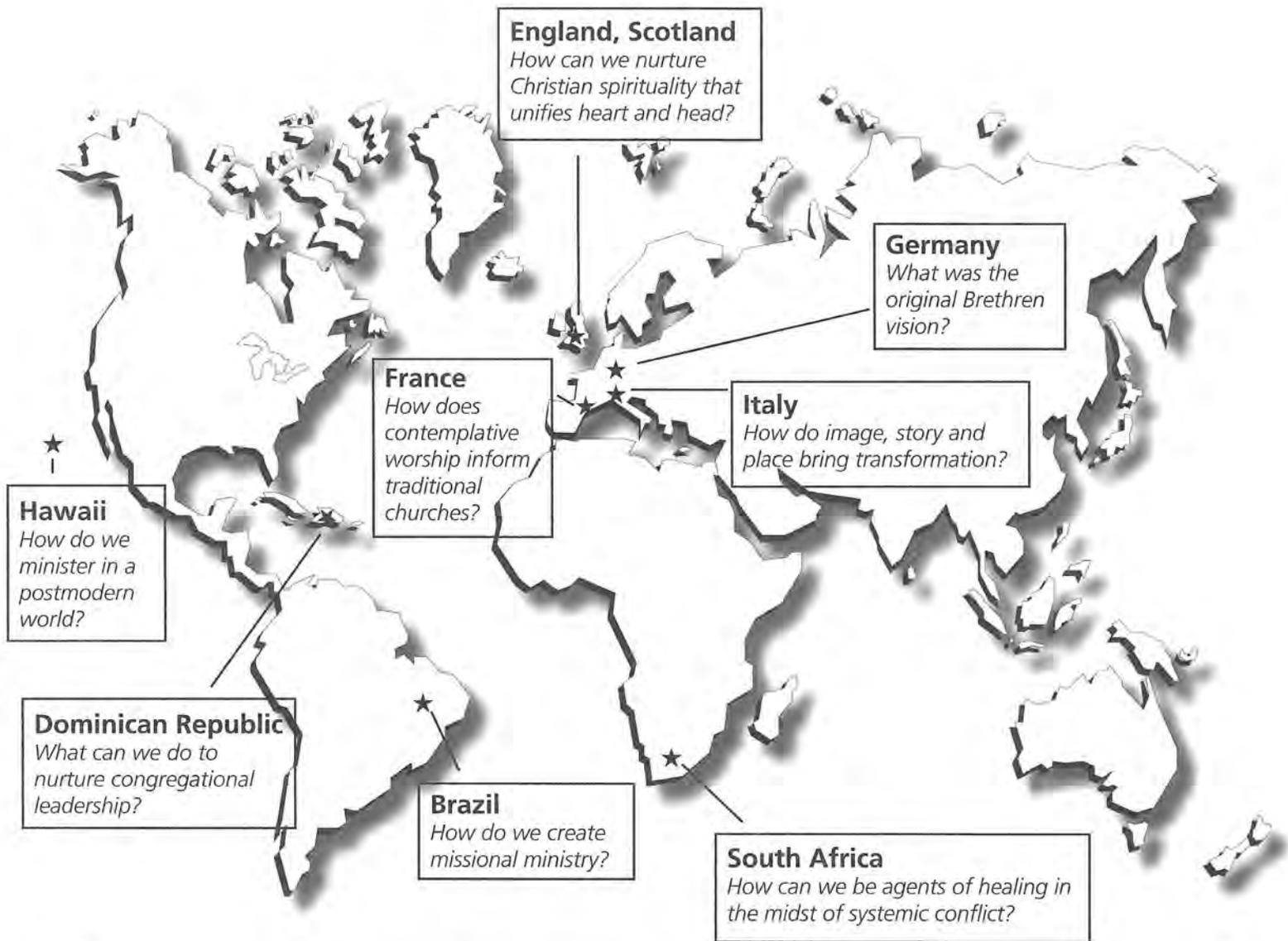
- Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., as associate pastor for youth ministry and congregational life in January. Chinworth led the spiritual life program of the campus' community of almost 30 denominations and faiths. He has served on the college's counseling team, and provided personal and pre-marital counseling. He also has worked to dissipate liberal-conservative tension on campus, according to a release from the college, and was influential in creating a new format for acclimating first-year students to academic life.
- **Del Keeney**, executive director of Congregational Life Ministries for the General Board, has announced his resignation effective Dec. 31. He has accepted a call to pastor Mechanicsburg (Pa.)

- Church of the Brethren. Keeney began working with the board in January 2004. Keeney served on the board's Leadership Team and oversaw the denomination's resources for the care and support of its congregations. With more than 20 years of pastoral ministry experience, Keeney has served in both long-term ministries and in intentional interim positions.
- **Robert Raker**, Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) worker and mission staff with the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships, has completed two years of service in the Dominican Republic. A member of Greencastle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, he has been teaching English as a second language in the Dominican.

WHERE IN THE WORLD

are Brethren pastors going?

(and what on earth are they learning?)



Where might your ministry questions take you?

Church of the Brethren pastors in the Vital Pastor track of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence meet in small groups to create a two-year study focus around a critical question, to visit places in the world whose resources shed light on their question, and for shared learning and support.



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Supported through a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc.



Courtesy of Camp Blue Diamond

Looking up: The denomination's 29 camps and outdoor ministry centers had another full summer this year, doing a variety of programs for children, youth, and adults. Some reported strong attendance, even in a National Youth Conference year. Camp Bethel (Fincastle, Va.) reported a record total of 810 campers, the fifth straight year attendance increased. Above, some campers at Camp Blue Diamond (Petersburg, Pa.) try their hand at rappelling. Camping professionals and others interested in outdoor ministry will meet at Camp Bethel later this month, as the camp hosts the biennial Outdoor Ministries Association National Conference Nov. 17-19. The theme is "Fill Their Cups: Fostering Leadership." More details are at www.campbethelvirginia.org/OMA.htm.

ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Paul Grout, the 2001 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference moderator, served as speaker for Bridgewater's Fall Spiritual Focus on Sept. 26. Grout, from Putney, Vt., spoke on "Jesus as Warrior" and "Jesus as Mystic Monk" at the convocations.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Bluffton (Ohio) University English professor Jeff Gundy did a presentation titled "The Return of the Prodigal: Anabaptists and Imagination" on Sept. 21 at the college's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Copies of Gundy's book *Walker in the Fog: On Mennonite Writing*, for which he earned the Young Center's 2006 Dale W. Brown Book Award, were available for signing.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

The weekly news magazine *US News & World Report* rated Juniata 95th in the first tier of its 2006-2007 rankings of the best liberal arts colleges in the nation, according to the publication's "America's Best Colleges" issue. Juniata jumped five places from its ranking of 100 last year. Juniata also is one of just 40 colleges featured in the book *Colleges That Change Lives*, by Loren Pope.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The school announced in September that the Lewis family had made a \$500,000 pledge toward La Verne's Campus Center Project. Richard Lewis, a member of the La Verne board of trustees since 2000, previously established two four-year, \$40,000 scholarships to the university for students who have participated in the "STUDENTS RUN L.A." program. About \$20.5 million has been secured toward the Campus Center Project's \$26.1 million goal.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education has re-accredited Manchester's athletic training major through the 2009-2010 academic year, when the commission will conduct another comprehensive evaluation. Manchester had 47 athletic training majors entering this fall.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson on Oct. 13 honored Roy Winter, Vic Ullom, and Dennis Kingery as this year's Young Alumni Awards. Winter is executive director of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md; Ullom works with the Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe; and Kingery is director of credit union operations for Brethren Benefit Trust. The award recognizes alumni who graduated within the past 25 years for significant achievements and service.

Listen to the earth
by Stephanie Stover

Listen to the earth, hear it?
It makes trees alive, so it sounds like life.

Breathe in the wind, smell it?
It carries scents all over the earth.
So it smells like friends and sounds like life.

Watch the birds, see them flying?
They turn and dip on the wind currents.
So they look like acrobats, smell like friends, and sound like life.

Touch the water, feel it?
The birds drink and play in it.
So it feels like silk, looks like an acrobat,
smells like friends, and sounds like life.

Eat the fruit, taste it?
The water keeps it fresh.
So it tastes like berries, feels like silk,
looks like an acrobat, smells like friends, and sounds like life.

Listen to the earth, hear it? Breathe in the wind, smell it?
Watch the birds, see them? Touch the water, feel it? Eat the fruit, taste it?

Stephanie Stover is a member of Quinter (Kan.) Church of the Brethren. She presented this poem at Camp Colorado's junior high camp in June.



'Our Endangered Values': Former president makes his appeal

“One of the least effective presidents ever, he became the most effective former president ever.”

That statement, taken from a recent entry on the website realclearpolitics.com, expresses an opinion widely held about the 39th US president, Jimmy Carter. Regardless of how future historians rank his presidency, Carter will surely be remembered—perhaps even revered—for his humanitarian efforts primarily carried out through the Carter Center, efforts that earned him the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize.

In his book *Our Endangered Values*, Carter has raised a warning flag to his fellow citizens. The subtitle to the book, “America’s Moral Crisis,” underscores his deep concern about the spiritual and political condition in which we find ourselves. He is especially unhappy about what he calls the “narrowly defined theological beliefs” held by people of influence in our country. In his view such people have increasingly exerted their power in both religious and political arenas. Carter decries their success in changing “the nuances and subtleties of historic debate into black-and-white rigidities and the personal derogation of those who dare to disagree.” He devotes one of his chapters to conflicts among religious people, focusing attention on his own Baptist tradition.



KEN GIBBLE

In his view such people have increasingly exerted their power in both religious and political arenas. Carter decries their success in changing “the nuances and subtleties of historic debate into black-and-white rigidities and the personal derogation of those who dare to disagree.”

Carter continues to teach a Sunday morning Bible class in his home church in Plains, Ga. Several hundred visitors attend each week, “only about 15 percent” of them Baptists. Calling himself an “evangelical Christian,” he gives a summary of his beliefs in Chapter 2 of his book. Titled “My Traditional Christian Faith,” this chapter traces his spiritual pilgrimage from a childhood faith to that of a believer who has undergone many spiritual challenges and been profoundly influenced by people of many different religious traditions.

From this starting point, Carter tackles head-on issues that invoke passionate debate in our culture. He offers his convictions about religious fundamentalism, science and religion, civil liberties, the role of women, homosexuality, abortion, the death penalty, terrorism, the environment, and preemptive

war. If most readers react as I did to his opinions, even those who disagree with his positions on any of these issues will admire his reasoned approach, backed by his understanding of Christian values.

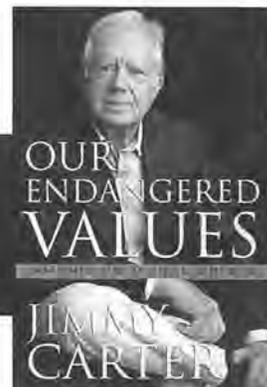
I found Carter especially convincing in his argument for keeping firmly in place the wall of separation between church and state. In one of his harshest criticisms of American Christians, he quotes the words of Jesus found in Luke 4:18. Speaking in the synagogue of his hometown Nazareth, Jesus stated his mission to “bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” Carter testifies that, after a lifetime in both religious and political endeavors, he has “reluctantly” concluded that “government office-holders and not church members” are more likely to continue this mission announced by Jesus.

Asked to give an address on the subject “What is the world’s greatest challenge in the new millennium?” Carter responded with a strong assertion that the greatest challenge is the growing chasm between rich and poor. He asserts that when we recite the Lord’s Prayer and pray for God’s kingdom to come on earth, “We are asking for an end to political and economic injustice within worldly regimes.”

For many Brethren readers, *Our Endangered Values* will induce murmurs of “Amen, brother,” as they discover how this former president draws on his Christian faith to critique the foreign policies of the current administration, especially those policies subsequent to September 11, 2001. Harshly critical of the decision to conduct preemptive war, Carter relies on the principles of “just war” to make his argument. However, some Brethren, including this one, will be less than sympathetic with Carter’s insistence, “I never felt that my personal dedication to military service was a violation of my faith in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.”

No other former president has been so energetically involved in addressing poverty and civil rights, as well as peace and reconciliation, both home and abroad as Jimmy Carter. No other former president has translated his Christian faith into a compassionate activism as he has. No other former president would have, or could have, written this book. **W**

Ken Gibble is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. He lives in Greencastle, Pa.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis, by Jimmy Carter, 224 pp. Published by Simon & Schuster, New York, 2005. ISBN: 0743284577. List price: \$25 (hardback). The book can be ordered through Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.

Who really belongs?

Sheraton's ad "You belong" [Editorial, June 2006] seems to have unspoken meanings that are intended for a certain class of people: the "wealthy." The ad does give a strong message of security, comfort, and exclusivity. It is a designed policy of segregation, based upon wealth, or the need to know and feel privileged, to meet the right people in the right places.

The Modesto congregation built an addition approximately four years ago for fellowship, conference meetings, to house the homeless, banquets, etc. Much to our delight, that space is called "the gathering place": all-inclusive, communal. Come, break bread with us, so we may learn to know you. Two simple words, yes, with totally different connotations.

Bob Vardaman
Modesto, Calif.

Keep and expand New Windsor

On May 7, 2006, by council action, the Edgewood congregation (New Windsor, Md.) voted to communicate to the General board our thoughts on the future of the Brethren Service Center.

The council is unanimous in its support of retaining the property and ministries located at the center for the following reasons:

For 60 years, the center has been the hub of the denomination's service ministry.

"New Windsor" is recognized throughout the world as the link to the denomination.

To "people in the pews," the center is viewed as the denomination's witness

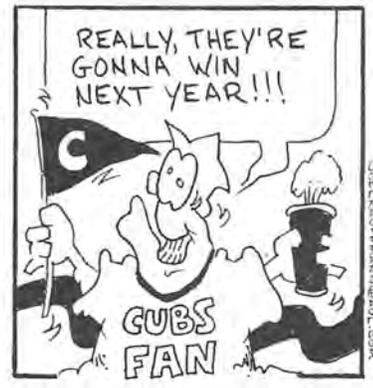
in action.

A large segment of Church of the Brethren congregations is located in close proximity to the center, enabling many "people in the pews" to continue the work of Jesus through volunteerism.

Therefore, instead of selling or leasing the Brethren Service Center, we suggest revitalizing and expanding the ministries located there as follows:

Invest in these General Board ministries rather than expecting them to be

Pontius' Puddle



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- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 11-23)
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- RUSSIA and UKRAINE (July 27 - August 10)
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"self-supporting."

Think outside the box to expand the witness and service opportunities already in place.

Catch the vision: Determining the future of the Brethren Service Center is a "probletnity" (a perceived problem that is actually an opportunity in disguise).

Be assured that the Edgewood fellowship is keeping this matter, the General Board, the Church of the Brethren, and the body of Christ in our prayers. May God guide us in continuing the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.

Thomas Barnes

Church board chair, Edgewood Church of the Brethren
New Windsor, Md.

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The Church's Role in Mental Illness



Hear Church of the Brethren members tell their stories of recovery from mental illness in ABC's new DVD "Offering Hope: The Church's Role in Mental Illness."

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- Friendship and support from the church community can make all the difference to families traveling on the road toward mental health.

Supporting theological, worship and other resources used for the 2006 Health Promotion Sunday on the same theme can be downloaded at www.brethren-caregivers.org.

This two-DVD set provides a 12-minute presentation with complete interviews of each person featured in the presentation.
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Association of Brethren Caregivers

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Don't sensationalize

I believe that any church member who is suffering from addictions and mental illness that lead to behavior that places them in the legal system needs to have the "hope" of reconciliation and recovery. Most families have the privacy to grieve, work towards healing, and attempt to put their lives back together; unfortunately the David Eller family has not. By the very nature of his position within the denomination he has been a public figure. The question then becomes for me what does this type of publicity mean in regard to the pain that his family and friends are experiencing?

At a time when the Association of Brethren Caregivers has put together such wonderful resources on helping congregations deal with and minister to those suffering from mental illness (see "Offering Hope: The Church's Role in Mental Illness") I was very disappointed and hurt by the way that Newsline and MESSENGER have handled the "news" of Dr. Eller's arrest [September 2006 News, p. 23]. It seems to me that instead of the focus being on the arrest and the

sensationalism of the charges, we as a church need to be focusing on forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, and healing.

We need to find ways to approach all who suffer from addiction, be it sexual, drugs, alcohol, gambling, or any of the other many forms people are faced with. The statistics are staggering in relation to the number of persons who are afflicted with addictions, and the church needs to learn how to minister to those who are suffering. I personally would be very surprised if there were any members of our denomination who did not know, work with, worship with, or have family members who were suffering from some type of addiction or some other form of mental illness.

I would ask that MESSENGER and the editor of Newsline refrain from any further sensationalism of the Ellers' family crisis. Please remember that the many family members, friends, and associates of Dave and his immediate family too are suffering. Do not add to the family's pain by denying the positive contributions that Dr. Eller has made to



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our denomination (such as his work on the History Detectives episode also mentioned in MESSENGER) as a historian, pastor, and teacher.

How we respond to this crisis, I feel, will say much about how we as a church really take the teachings of Christ and put them in to action. Do we truly believe in God's hope of forgiveness, love, reconciliation, and restoration? Are we really willing to do the hard work to accomplish God's work here on earth by reaching out to all of those suffering and who are in need?

CLASSIFIED ADS

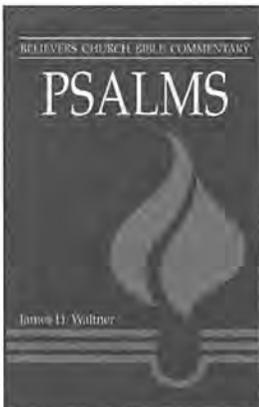
Tucson, Arizona. The Well is a new church project of the PSWD located in Tucson. We are looking for those whom God has called to be a part of the launch team for this project. If you are interested in reaching those in their twenties and thirties with the good news and are intrigued with how Purpose-Driven can be Brethren, give us a shout at jb44a@yahoo.com or call at 520-400-1259.

To All in Northern Virginia and DC: Arlington Church of the Brethren welcomes you and invites you to join us for a wonderful worship, nurturing Bible study, and fun fellowship! There are many activities to enjoy: Children's worship, Sunday school for all ages, choir, handbells, VBS, quilting and crafts, fellowship meals, Soup and Pie Bazaar, and outreach in the community and the world! We are located at 300 N. Montague St., Arlington, VA 22203, 703-524-4100, www.arlingtoncob.org. Once again, welcome!

Worship with us in Northern Virginia. Do you know of someone living in, moving to, or visiting the Virginia suburbs of Washington D.C.? The people of Oakton Church of the Brethren warmly invite everyone to join us Sunday mornings for church school at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 11:00 a.m. Contact the church office at 703-281-4411; e-mail office@oaktonbrethren.org, or visit the church website at www.oaktonbrethren.org for more information.

Hand in Hand with God: Witnessing on the Way by Flora L. Williams, Ph.D., M.Div., AFC. In this inspiring book, Flora tells how, by losing her hand, she found new ways to reach out to others. An accident would have been a tragedy if it hadn't become an encounter with the Holy along the way. Travel with her as she rearranges her life, piano playing, and environment. Words of hope are intertwined with scripture. Flora graduated from Manchester College, Purdue University, and Bethany Theological Seminary. She is professor emerita of Purdue University, ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, musician, chaplain, financial counselor, wife, and mother of three. www.florawilliams.com. ISBN 1-4241-2147-7. Order from online bookstores; call Publish America 301-695-1707; through local bookstores; or send \$12.50 to Williams, PO Box 4006, Lafayette IN 47903.

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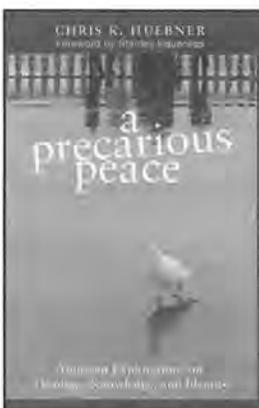


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Please keep all of the Ellers' family, friends, coworkers, and associates in prayer. Pray that fairness within the legal system will be achieved and that healing for all involved will come about.

Terrilynn Griffith
Dayton, Ohio

We need peace witness

My first MESSENGER in many years arrived today. For some years I have been called to worship in substantial

ways in other forums. I found there a great community of interest with others who have some elements that are deeply meaningful with other New Testament believers. It seems to me the Church of the Brethren shares meaningful elements of truth with many.

At my sister's death I revisited my home congregation. I am deeply convicted to return to my roots in the Church of the Brethren peace witness.

In recent awareness and conversations, I realize anew how unique and

meaningful our common heritage and peace witness is in these times. There is a great a need now for our common Brethren/Mennonite/Quaker witness for peace education. My childhood was set apart by this distinct minority-consciousness during 20th-century conflicts. Fellow believers sustained my friendships and actions.

My hope is we can unite among ourselves and with others to sustain those principles.

Richard Bittinger
Portland, Ore.

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-325-8039 ext. 206; jcllements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

- Chiques**, Manheim, Pa.: Jennifer Hosler
- Dayton**, Va.: Jenny Anne Flory, Michelle Heatwole, Michael Croushorn, Scotty Colvin, Barbara Colvin, Don Rhodes, Cathy Rhodes, Steve Raish, Deanna Raish
- Dupont**, Ohio: Christina Sarka, Jacob Nicholson, Joseph Nicholson, Joshua Nicholson
- East Chippewa**, Orrville, Ohio: Joann Widmer, Kelly Allison, Brian Nieman, Andrew Nieman, Allison Hostetler, Jason Keener, Heather Keener, Theodore Gisinger, Peggy Gisinger, Christina Studer, David Delozier, Connie Delozier, Paige McMillen, Allen Good, Jr., Megan Perry
- Harness Run**, Burlington, W. Va.: Krista Gibson, Curtis Ellifritz
- Hollins Road**, Roanoke, Va.: Eli Craft, Vivian Guthrie, Ronald Wade, Kathy Wade
- Jackson Park**, Jonesborough, Tenn.: Terry Story, Evelyn Story, Mike Tisor, Tanya Tisor, Joey Werner
- Marion**, Ohio: Gary Tewalt, Judy Tewalt
- Marsh Creek**, Gettysburg, Pa.: Bonnie Lee Jacoby, Charles O. Mickley, Maxine Smith, Adam A. Brown, Dodie K. Brown
- Moorefield**, W.Va.: Donald Lee Crites, Garrett Branson Keller, Katherine Ellen Ours, Wayne William Shockey, Jr.
- Nappanee**, Ind.: Nathaniel Haines, Cindy Metzger, Philip Paugh
- Rayman**, Friedens, Pa.: Sue Bent
- Reading, First**, Wyomissing, Pa.: Peggy Kercher, Elnora Smythe, J. Robert Smythe, Alice Stegeman, Jo Ann Austin, R. Monroe Austin
- Shiloh**, Moatsville, W.Va.: Annette Shaffer
- Skyridge**, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Sara Miller, Erin Tomlinson
- Somerset**, Pa.: Joyce Pritts, Eric Huet, Drew Schrock, Jarod Zehner, Hannah Watkins, Julie

- Garrity, Alyssa Weigle, Katie Custer, Wendell Ritenour, Cynthia Ritenour, Wendy Ritenour, Keith Ritenour
- Spring Creek**, Hershey, Pa.: Moyer Craighead, Esta Craighead
- Stevens Hill**, Elizabethtown, Pa.: Bernard Alwine, Judy Alwine, Kelsey Bowersox, Jim Engle, Ashlyn Robertson, Victoria Schmidt, Laura Shenk, Jolene Wagner, Beth Wilson
- Trotwood**, Ohio: Deborah Steiner
- Uniontown**, Pa.: Vincent Cable, Charlotte Cable
- Warrensburg**, Mo.: Andrew Pearce
- Westernport**, Md.: Stacy Metz, Glen Metz, Roger Wilt, Jeanne Wilt
- White Oak**, Manheim, Pa.: Glendon Zook, Denise Zook, Jesse Copenhaver, Kelsey Wenger, Joanna Rogers, Lavon Weaver, Rebecca Rogers, Dawson Copenhaver, Elijah Brubaker, Natalie Clapper, Victoria Clapper, Tyler Minnich
- Wolgath**, Dillsburg, Pa.: Brian Simmoneau, Stacey Simmoneau

Anniversaries

- Boothe**, Lowell H. and Pat, Floyd, Va., 55
- Denlinger**, William and Charlotte, Dayton, Ohio, 50
- Engle**, Kenneth and Ruth, Purgitsville, W.Va., 60
- Erbaugh**, Samuel and Eileen, Brookville, Ohio, 60
- Flory**, Laurrell and Alvina, Springfield, Ohio, 55
- Franklin**, Lawrence and Helen, Blue Ridge, Va., 55
- Graf**, Willard and Doris, Adrian, Mich., 60
- Hendricks**, Doyle and Betty, Adrian, Mich., 55
- Hoover**, Eldon and Hazel, Modesto, Calif., 60
- Miller**, Robert and Donna, New Paris, Ind., 50
- Reid**, Paul and Peggy, Broadway, Va., 60
- Sizemore**, Harlan and Joan, New Paris, Ind., 55
- Smith**, Henry and Naomi, New Holland, Pa., 60
- Stum**, Bill and Miriam, Elizabethtown Pa., 55
- Yordy**, Marvin and Peggy, Roanoke, Ill., 55
- Zellers**, Richard and Ethel, Reading, Pa., 65

Deaths

- Agnew**, Carl Thompson, 86, Bayard, W.Va., July 3
- Albright**, Nathan, 51, Las Vegas, Nev., Aug. 17
- Allen**, Donna R., 82, DuBois, Pa., Aug. 18
- Annand**, Helen Howes, 87, Bridgewater, Va., Aug. 9
- Baker**, Herman Isaac, 88, Fulks Run, Va., Aug. 14
- Bare**, Virginia, 89, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 9
- Bartenbach**, Wilhelm, 67, Jamaica, N.Y., Aug. 24
- Beck**, Bill, 81, Bryan, Ohio, Aug. 7
- Beck**, Ethel, 86, Denver, Pa., July 12
- Blevins**, Wilda, 81, Springfield, Ohio, Aug. 3
- Bolyard**, Clara, 87, Moatsville, W.Va., Jan. 7
- Burkholder**, Paul S., 80, Gettysburg, Pa., Sept. 4
- Burner**, Mary Alleen, 63, Luray, Va., Aug. 26
- Buryanek**, Clarence, 97, McPherson, Kan., Aug. 18
- Caldwell**, Julius K., 81, Roanoke, Va., July 6
- Clark**, Ralph, 91, Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 18
- Dell**, Byron E., 87, Dayton, Ohio, Aug. 30
- Dietz**, Regie Victoria Vance, 95, Star Tannery, Va., July 31
- Dove**, Carroll Gordon, 75, Broadway, Va., Aug. 12
- Dugger**, Millie May, 70, New Market, Va., Aug. 17
- Earhart**, Anna Lois, 85, Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 7
- Eaton**, Mac Ellen, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., July 19
- Ebaugh**, Marcile, 85, Bryan, Ohio, Aug. 21
- Ediger**, Phyllis, 84, McPherson, Kan., Aug. 27
- Fahnestock**, Norman, 90, Lancaster, Pa., June 26
- Feaster**, Joseph, 20, Burlington, W.Va., March 11
- Garlitz**, Hazel, 88, Somerset, Pa., Aug. 30
- Goehenour**, Dennis David, 51, Mount Jackson, Va., Sept. 6
- Godfrey**, Charles E., 74, Seven Valleys, Pa., Sept. 3
- Good**, Warren Franklin, 85, Richmond, Va., July 29
- Gould**, Angela, 54, Durham, Maine, June 12
- Grady**, Ida Virginia, 100, Dayton, Va., Aug. 13
- Greening**, Minnie M., 94, New

- Oxford, Pa., Aug. 29
- Gudykunst**, Elinor, 86, Reading, Pa., June 23
- Haldeman**, James H., 63, Manheim, Pa., Aug. 28
- Harnish**, Dora V., 86, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 30
- Heatwole**, Hazel Rhodes, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., July 20
- Hensley**, Velma Elaine Coverstone, 78, Strasburg, Va., Aug. 4
- High**, Charlotte, 79, Pottstown, Pa., Aug. 17
- Hinkle**, Woodrow Donald, 70, Broadway, Va., July 3
- Hoover**, Vivian, 95, Goshen, Ind., July 27
- Jenkins**, Lawrence A., 80, Wardensville, W.Va., Aug. 24
- Johnson**, Edna, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Aug. 17
- Kesner**, Goldie Arbutis, 92, Maysville, W.Va., June 26
- King**, Josephine Pearl Perdue, 91, Salem, Va., Aug. 27
- Kozsey**, Shirley E., 78, Pemberville, Ohio, Aug. 27
- Lam**, Theresa Ann, 56, Port Republic, Va., Aug. 12
- Long**, Harvey Jay, II, 24, Dayton, Va., Aug. 5
- Marston**, David William, Jr., 71, New Market, Va., Sept. 5
- Masiello**, Suzanne Wampler, 41, Richmond, Va., July 11
- May**, Esther Nair, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 29
- Miller**, Herman Shaver, 90, Bridgewater, Va., June 27
- Miller**, Merna M., 90, Waterloo, Iowa, Aug. 8
- Morris**, Viola, 99, Uniontown, Pa., Aug. 15
- Myer**, Jacob, 98, Manheim, Pa., June 28
- Olsen**, Florence M., 96, Modesto, Calif., Aug. 27
- Olwine**, Verl, 88, Troy, Ohio, Aug. 5
- Powell**, Mary S., 79, Hagerstown, Md., July 26
- Richards**, Dorothy Gean, 56, Luray, Va., Aug. 6
- Ritchie**, Geneva Houff, 82, Weyers Cave, Va., July 22
- Seilhamer**, Chester W., 91, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 26
- Shewman**, Stanley, 69, Akron, Ind., July 25
- Shiflet**, Virginia K. Fulk, 72, Fulks Run, Va., Aug. 20
- Showalter**, Alda R., 79, Harrisonburg, Va., July 24
- Siambaugh**, Michelle D., 44, New Oxford, Pa., Aug. 12
- Stayner**, Beverly Louise, 76,

- Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 9
- Streets**, Mary G., 85, Philippi, W.Va., July 27
- Sutton**, Martha K., 80, Stuarts Draft, Va., Aug. 1
- Switzer**, Neva B., 78, Waterford, Calif., Aug. 14
- Tolsma**, Donald Dean, 77, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 1
- Turner**, Sandra Kay, 45, Broadway, Va., Aug. 2
- Wampler**, Dorothy Snow, 89, Port Republic, Va., Sept. 3
- Wampler**, Jeannette Heddings, 78, Grottoes, Va., Aug. 10
- Warnke**, Lee Robert, 86, Fort Collins, Colo., Sept. 5
- Wheeler**, Mary B. Mullen, 80, York, Pa., Sept. 9
- Witman**, Anna Mary, 81, Lancaster, Pa., March 15

Licensings

Myers, Nathan, Shen. Dist. (Middle River, Fort Defiance, Va.), Aug. 22

Ordinations

Laubenstein, Judith, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Mount Zion Road, Lebanon, Pa.), Aug. 13

Placements

- Bohrer**, Bradley, from pastor, Brook Park Community, Brook Park, Ohio, to director, Sudan Initiative, Church of the Brethren General Board, Elgin, Ill., Sept. 11
- House**, Rebecca J., associate pastor, Union Bridge, Md., Sept. 1
- McCallister**, Cara Austin, from pastor, Lewiston, Minn., to pastor, Lafayette, Ind., Aug. 20
- Risser**, James K., chaplain, Methodist Hospital, Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 7
- Shimer**, William C., Sr., from interim to pastor, Westernport, Md., Aug. 25
- Tevis**, Robert E., III, from pastor, Cerro Gordo, Ill., to pastor, Neighborhood, Montgomery, Ill., Aug. 20
- Tomson**, Jeffrey A., from interim to pastor, Living Faith, Florida, Ind., July 1
- Walker**, Judy M., associate pastor, East McKeesport, Pa., April 1

Violent tendencies

The events of Iraq represent a failure. So do those in Afghanistan, North Korea, Sudan, and a variety of other places around the globe.

Before some readers get their knickers in a bunch, this is not a political statement nor an indictment of the military. Many have been quick to point to Iraq and other hotspots as failures of the current administration, but the critique must be spread much more broadly. At issue here is not finger-pointing politics but a fundamental flaw in our culture.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Other recent signs of our failure have occurred much closer to home: Colorado, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Lancaster County, Pa.—all sites of school shootings this fall, several of them deadly.

And there are a host of other incidents that don't grab the headlines, or at least don't make the front page in large print.

The bottom line: Humans are a violent bunch, and we're not doing much about it. While humanity has made

progress in many ways over the centuries, the readiness with which we still turn to deadly force—often as a first rather than last resort—is a troubling failure.

Some blame our obsession with violence on the media.

This community truly showed the world “a different way of living” that goes far beyond plain dress and quaint modes of transportation. Under the glare of global media, the Amish gave an eloquent testimony to their understanding of following Jesus—the Jesus who told us to love our enemies.

Others point to video games and toys that encourage violent play. But ultimately, we don't have to look very far to place blame: the culprit is us.

We can choose to change the channel, turn off the TV, or go to a different movie, or at least reflect on it critically. We can become more involved with helping children play in healthy ways. We can educate and advocate and actively work against violence in the world.

Brethren have historically said that “all war is sin.” Not all Brethren affirm this position, but it remains an underlying belief for our denomination. We say we are a peace church.

Expressions on the futility of war and violence have not come only from pacifist traditions, however. Consider again

the words of former president Jimmy Carter, a long-time Southern Baptist: “War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children.”

Or hear Dwight Eisenhower, one of the most decorated generals in this nation's history. In his famous “Chance for Peace” address, given to the American Society of Newspaper Editors while he was president, Eisenhower said:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. . . . This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense.”

The shooting in the Amish schoolhouse particularly gripped the nation because it represented such a sharp contrast: an incredibly violent act in a community that abhors violence in all its forms.

Many people marveled in the weeks that followed at the quiet testimony of the Amish, who surrounded the gunman's family with love, attended his funeral amid the funerals for their own children and their neighbors' children, and unwaveringly expressed forgiveness.

This community truly showed the world “a different way of living” that goes far beyond plain dress and quaint modes of transportation. Under the glare of global media, the Amish gave an eloquent testimony to their understanding of following

Jesus—the Jesus who told us to love our enemies, whether they are next door, across the country, or in a different country halfway around the world.

What is our testimony to the world today? We need not wait until violence touches us

personally. People are dying daily, whether in gang violence in our cities, in shootings in our schools, or in Middle East wars that kill soldiers and civilians alike at an alarming rate.

It calls for a fundamental change in attitude and action. The roots of most violence—on a small scale or large—can be found in missteps and misdeeds committed days, years, or decades before: greed, the lust for power, oppression, abuse, or even the simple omission of caring or love.

We have had conversations recently on what it means to be a living peace church. We have some good, existing initiatives and examples to build on. The stage is set for us to help show the world a chance for peace: a peace based on Jesus' unflinching love.—Ed. **W**

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www.bridgewater.edu

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[www.etc.edu](http://www.etown.edu)

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www.juniata.edu

University of La Verne

La Verne, California
www.ulv.edu

Manchester College

North Manchester, Indiana
www.manchester.edu

McPherson College

McPherson, Kansas
www.mcpherson.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary

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www.bethanyseminary.edu

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