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Brethren

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of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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David Sollenberger

ONTHECOVER

We live in a fast-paced world, one sometimes described as being “technology-driven.” The church has at times in the past made use of the technology of the times (like the printing press), and at other times been suspicious of it or at odds with it. How can we take the best of the technology of today to enhance and expand our worship, witness, and other areas of church life?

8 The church and technology: ‘Digital stained glass’

A cluster of stories this month looks at the place and uses of technology in the church. Brethren video producer David Sollenberger looks at how some congregations are implementing new technology to enhance their worship services (p. 8). Another feature examines the possibilities and limitations of using the Internet for connection and community (p. 12). And a third visits the phenomenon of “blogging,” and how that forum is being used to exchange ideas in the religious sphere (p. 14).

16 A true gift exchange

In the aftermath of World War II, John Eberly went to Europe hoping to make a difference. He started a program for students that created ripples far beyond what even he could have imagined.

18 Jeremiah: Messenger of judgment and hope

God gave Jeremiah a difficult task: Delivering an unpopular message to the people of Judah in a time when they were threatened by enemies outside their gates. But Jeremiah’s message didn’t end there.

20 Districts deal with divisions

Several districts have wrestled recently with divisions over human sexuality, biblical interpretation, and other concerns. A special report examines how three districts are navigating these divides.

DEPARTMENTS

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In an informal talk to publishers, the executive director of the Louisville Institute summarized his observations after several years of evaluating applications for Lilly-funded sabbaticals for pastors. Particular intriguing was one detail from a survey on reading conducted among those who had been given sabbatical grants: The 176 pastors who responded had read 1,800 books, but most of the books (89 percent) were cited by only one person. In other words, there were virtually no books in common for this select group of pastors.

While the survey was not scientific, the information suggests a reality that we already know to be true. The primacy of the once-major television networks has been supplanted by hundreds of cable channels. National general-interest magazines have lost ground to specialty publications. Internet sites deliver content that matches each visitor's interests and habits.



WENDY MCFADDEN
Publisher

All of this is thought-provoking—and somewhat daunting for a publisher whose niche is a very small denomination with a full range of micro-niches.

I got a different view of our little niche when I sat behind a book table at the Miami Book Fair International. Brethren Press was partnering with the Miami First Church of the Brethren, which chose this creative way to raise the profile of the Brethren and offer an alternative voice in the bustling street fair. There we were between the Krishnamurti Foundation and the *Miami Herald*. The congregation is small, but thinks big.

Several people thanked us for being there. One said he wasn't Christian but was glad to finally see a Christian group speaking about peace. Quite a few perked up at the reference to Heifer International and thumbed through *Faith the Cow*. Many were stopped by the Mennonite-published *Where Was God on Sept. 11?* (One woman rolled her eyes at the title, leaving us to wonder what exactly her expression meant.) Dozens of passersby picked up the "Consider Jesus" bookmark produced by the Miami First congregation, and two or three said they planned to attend a January peace book discussion group hosted by the congregation. One man even circled back to make sure he had the right directions to the church.

Was the church's foray a success? Not if the purpose was to sell lots of books, but fortunately we agreed early on that wasn't our expectation. But yes if the goal was to get out of the church building and into the public square with the message of following Jesus' way of peace. In a world with a dizzying array of options, do we have a chance of being noticed? We won't know unless we try.

Wendy McFadden

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Living out a miracle

New Haven Church of the Brethren pastor Bobby Reed opened the Nov. 12 service by telling everyone in the Sparta, N.C., congregation, "Today, this is a miracle."

It's not every day, after all, that a centenarian gives the sermon. Former pastor Clarence Priser celebrated his 100th birthday that morning, then preached the message from Matthew 24.

Clarence's journey to New Haven began after the death of his second wife in January 1986, when he was going through a period of grief. "During that year I cried more than I had ever cried in my life," he said, "and attended more denominational conferences than I had ever attended."

Up until that time, Clarence had enjoyed an active and rewarding life. After graduating from Manchester College in 1932, he became a public school teacher. He taught for nine years, then became a professional portrait photographer. At the age of 20, Clarence became a minister. His main reason for operating the studio (photography had been a longstanding interest of his mother, Ida Mae Garst Priser) was to be able to serve more effectively in the free ministry for 15 years in Southern Ohio.

He enjoyed two happy marriages, first to Gladys King Priser for 52 years and then to Mary Stover Priser, until 1986. But alone and retired from the studio and almost 80 years old, he realized he was having problems coping with his grief. Some friends suggested he enter the Brethren Retirement Community in nearby Greenville, but he felt God had more for him to do.

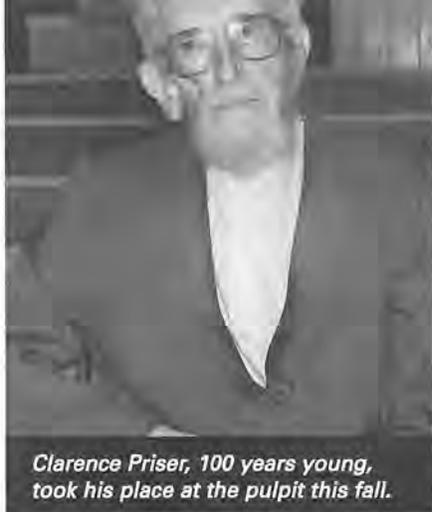
People urged him to go south, so he purchased a motor home and took off for Florida. He figured no church would consider an almost-80-year-old pastor if he mailed in a profile, so he decided to go in person. When he arrived, however, the pastoral vacancy had been filled. After a few days he returned northward, looking for a place where God could use him.

On his way, he learned that James Myer was leading revival at New Haven, a small church in the western mountains of North Carolina. He decided to go. The church was looking for a pastor, and soon after the revival he delivered a trial sermon. The church asked him to be their interim pastor and later called him as pastor. He served them for the next 10 years.

He also opened a Christian bookstore, Christian Views, in Sparta. The store was to be non-profit, with the only purpose to help others find Christ. Clarence continues to operate the store with help from his caregiver, Ken Pulliam. Ken says Clarence is a good friend and a good spiritual influence. He notes that when Clarence was 90 years old he had a 30-minute workout routine including push-ups and sit-ups. Clarence quit driving when he was about 93, and only in the last few years has used a wheelchair.

Everyone who attended New Haven to hear God's servant, at the age of 100, continue to preach the gospel was indeed witnessing a miraculous life.—Martha Roudebush

Martha Roudebush is co-executive minister for Southeastern District. Parts of this article were drawn from Sparta, N.C., newspaper articles and articles written by former executive Shirley Spire.



Clarence Priser, 100 years young, took his place at the pulpit this fall.

Martha Roudebush

NORTHEAST Delegates at this fall's Mid-Atlantic District conference approved accepting Community of Joy (Salisbury, Md.) as a full member congregation.... Middle Pennsylvania's 2006 Tour de Dunker cycling event raised about \$4,500 for the district and Camp Blue Diamond. Cyclists visited all 55 district congregations.... Western Pennsylvania District has unveiled a new website at www.westernpacob.org.

SOUTHEAST An electrical fire struck Middle River Church of the Brethren (New Hope, Va.) on Nov. 11, causing heavy damage. A report in *The News Leader* newspaper said the sanctuary was gutted, but the congregation hoped to have the fellowship hall ready to hold services by Christmas. . . . Delegates at Virgina District's conference in November approved a resolution expressing concern over the use of mercury-based compounds as preservatives in commonly used childhood and other vaccines.

MIDWEST The Northern Indiana District office moved to 162 E. Market Street in Nappanee Dec. 1 after an offer was received to purchase the office's former location a few blocks away. . . . Current Illinois/Wisconsin District moderator Kevin Kessler was called as district executive, so moderator-elect Joyce Person of Polo, Ill., became moderator Dec. 31.... This fall's Camp Mack Festival (Milford, Ind.) raised \$17,000. Most of it will be used for camp scholarships.

OZARKS/PLAINS An auction at the now-closed Surrey (N.D.) congregation raised \$6,000. Offers to buy the building are being considered. . . . Bethany Theological Seminary student Pat Owen was the beneficiary this past year of a scholarship fund set up by Oklahoma Brethren. . . . Western Plains held its "Gathering II" event for congregational transformation and renewal Oct. 27-29 in Salina, Kan.

WEST Delegates at Pacific Southwest District conference in late October adopted a query concerning the frequency of Annual Conference. It will be sent on for Conference consideration this summer. A new fellowship, Latino Community Church of the Brethren in Fresno, Calif., was accepted. . . . A pair of youth peace retreats are scheduled to be held in California this month.

BY THE NUMBERS

11,500

Dollars raised and disbursed by this year's Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference quilt auction. The General Board Global Food Crisis Fund and three other ministries benefited.



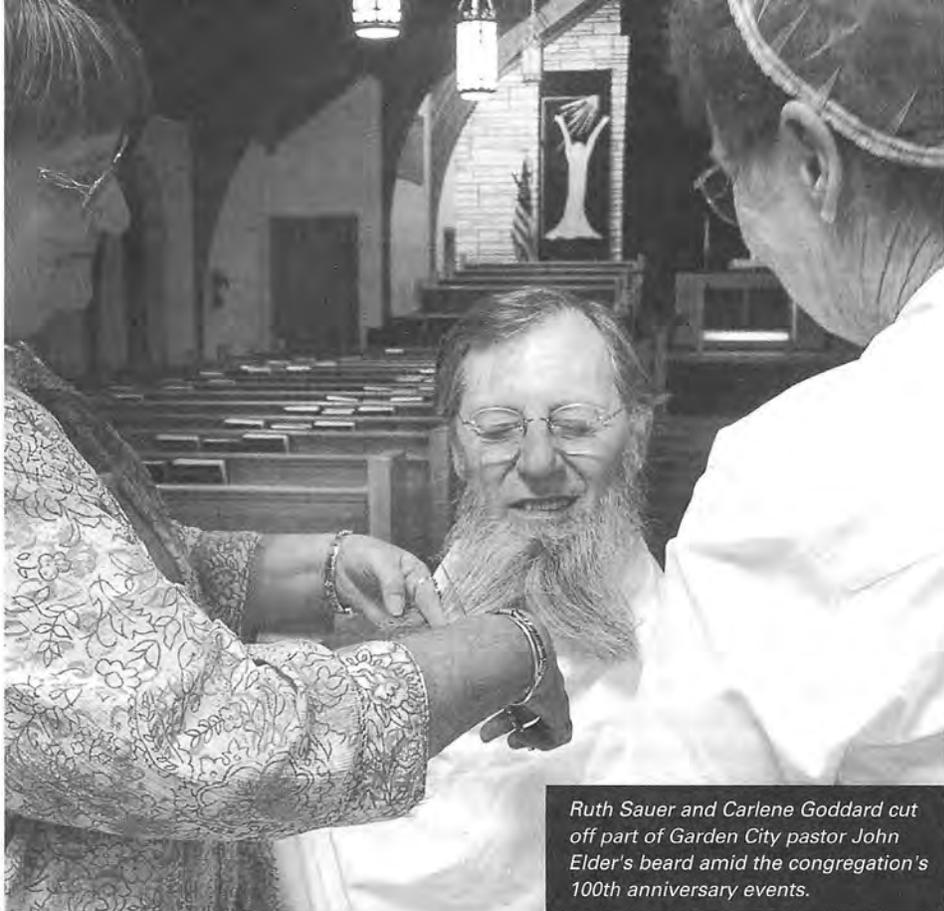
"Miracles, miracles, miracles, and more miracles. Each and every day we see God's hand in this work."

—Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) worker Gail Druck, serving at Meeting Ground in Elkton, Md., sharing reflections in the fall 2006 "The Volunteer" newsletter



Melissa Troyer

Cattle call: Rich Troyer, pastor of youth and family ministries at Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, challenged the youth in his church to raise \$700 in pledges for their Habitat for Humanity Walk this fall. They responded by raising \$1,000, and they had the cow waiting for him upon the completion of the walk. Fifteen members of the congregation took part in the 2½-mile walk on Oct. 15. Above, Troyer puckers up while walkers who raised the pledges look on: from left, Shannon Baker, Nate Freeze, Todd Bontrager, and Jordan Elliot.



Lilia Shearmire

Ruth Sauer and Carlene Goddard cut off part of Garden City pastor John Elder's beard amid the congregation's 100th anniversary events.

Garden City celebrates its centennial in style

Garden City (Kan.) Church of the Brethren remembered its 100 years Sept. 15-17 with a full weekend of activities, including horse-and-buggy rides and a tram tour of the city. One stop on the tour was the county museum, which had a special exhibit on the congregation's 100 years.

Several of the women spent Friday and Saturday in early Brethren dress, "but they were glad to be back to 2006 on Sunday!" member Lilia Shearmire reported.

An "old-time" service on Saturday

evening featured singing without accompaniment, with Jim Neher lining the songs and the congregation echoing. Western Plains District co-executive Ken Holderread was the guest speaker.

A time capsule that had been put in the church tower in 1953 was opened; at least 13 people were present who had been there when the box was originally sealed up. A new capsule was being created this fall, to be sealed for another 50 years.

Pastor John Elder even gave up his beard for the occasion. The trimming raised \$200 for the youth camp fund.



Allen Brubaker

John Brenneman, standing, helps to keep the memories of Civilian Public Service alive by sharing reflections with the 95 men and women who attended the 2006 CPS reunion held Aug. 17.

North Carolina church runs 'Amazing Race' with grace

"The Amazing Grace Race" (a takeoff on the popular CBS reality show) was held Nov. 4 at Mill Creek Church of the Brethren in Tryon, N.C., to provide a creative way to see the word of God, to do service projects, and to have fun while working together as a team as you "run the good race."

Teams consisted of three to four people, and all ages were welcome. The youngest participant was 6, and the oldest was 70-plus. More than 50 people from the church and around the community participated in all.

Some tasks they completed included washing team members' feet, finding "Moses" in the wilderness and listening to his story, pushing a teammate in a wheelbarrow around a track, figuring out a Bible code in order to make a phone call for the next clue, and raking leaves for the elderly. The teams had to complete 21 different tasks, the last one being a heart-felt one of making their own cross and carrying it up the hill as a team.

The first place team did all the tasks in three hours flat, and the final team came in after 4 1/2 hours. This turned out to be a great and powerful ministry for Mill Creek. Upon returning to the church, the excitement was evident.

"If we are to reach a younger generation with the message of Jesus, we need to be creative in ways that people can learn, see, and live the word of God," pastor Noel Naff said.

Every team that entered was ready to do it again, and all who participated are constantly talking about their adventure and what they learned while running the good race.—Stephanie Naff

Reunion keeps alive memories from Civilian Public Service

Ninety-five men and women attended a 2006 Civilian Public Service (CPS) reunion in Harrisonburg, Va., in August to reflect on their experiences during World War II.

Because their ages now range from 78 to 91, they asked CrossRoads (the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center) to plan and host the event. Following a mid-afternoon break, Ted Grimsrud helped the group to reflect on "Why CPS is important."

Most of the participants came from the eastern US. Many had served as health care technicians, milk testers, smoke jumpers, and road builders and laborers in the national park system. The CrossRoads board joined the group for the evening meal, prepared by members of the host Park View Mennonite Church.



Mill Creek members Jacob and Joseph Pate and Brittany Kenyon give Regina Pate a wheelbarrow ride in the Amazing Grace Race. The team took third place.

Lisa Kirby

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- The Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa., has announced that it will name its new Wellness Center after former long-time CEO **Harvey S. Kline**. Kline is a member of Hanover (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

- Happy birthday! **Dorothy Burris** of Virden (Ill.) Church of the Brethren celebrated her 103rd birthday this fall. **William Larsen** of Cando, N.D. celebrated his 101st on Sept. 28.

- More than two dozen writers and editors working with the **Believers Church Bible Commentary** series met for dinner Nov. 17 in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the publication of 20 volumes in 20 years. The editorial council hopes to complete the New Testament volumes within 10 years and the Old Testament volumes within 14 years. *Jeremiah* was the first volume published, in 1986.

- **Manchester College** (North Manchester, Ind.) had the top Student Education Association (SEA) chapter in the state for spring 2006. The Outstanding SEA Chapter award was announced by the Indiana SEA at its Oct. 21 fall conference. The chapter had 109 students.

- Indy Racing League driver **Sam Hornish Jr.**, a member of Poplar Ridge Church of the Brethren in Defiance, Ohio, is highlighted in a new book, *A Passion for Victory*, published by *The Bryan (Ohio) Times*. The 136-page book features more than 200 color photos highlighting the career of Hornish, who won the Indy 500 and the IRL points championship this past year.

- The **Breneman-Turner Mill**, part of the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center in Harrisonburg, Va., installed its new historical plaques in a ceremony attended by over 30 people on Nov. 12. The mill was authenticated last March as "a prime historical property" by being listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a Virginia Historic Landmark. It was built about 1800.

REMEMBERED

- A memorial service for **W. Marvin Will** was held Nov. 27 at Peace Valley (Mo.) Church of the Brethren; another service was held earlier in the year in Tulsa, Okla. Will, a McPherson (Kan.) College graduate and former Church of the Brethren General Board volunteer, went on to teach international relations for more than three decades at the University of Tulsa. He also assisted with development programs and election monitoring in numerous countries worldwide. He was 69.

- **Hazel Beahm Bucher**, 97, a life-long member of the Church of the Brethren and one-time secretary to J. Edgar Hoover, died Nov. 1 in Caldwell, Idaho. Born in Nokesville, Va., she worked for 17 years at the FBI, 13 of them as Hoover's personal secretary and stenographer. She was also the official reporter for Annual Conference for several years. A memorial service was to be held at Nokesville Church of the Brethren.

- University of Miami football star **Bryan Pata** died Nov. 8 following a shooting outside his apartment in Miami. His family attends Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren, and pastor Ludovic St. Fleur conducted Pata's memorial service on Nov. 14.

Wide open till you see God—then brake

“Wide open . . . till you see God.” *Dave saw it a few years ago on a T-shirt at a gathering of sports car enthusiasts. One day while mowing the lawn, he started contemplating the implications of this T-shirt theology, wondering what it means for us who follow Jesus. Then he started testing it as a devotional for a men’s prayer breakfast at his church.*

“There must be a zillion scriptures that would support that image,” Sharon challenged him.

SHARON K. WILLIAMS
& DAVID WOLFE

“Absolutely. Like ‘You shall love your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself,’ ”

Dave fired back. “And I guess the braking part—maybe that happens when we get to heaven. Then we can brake.”

What does it mean to live “wide open till we see God?” We might come close to it in a few moments of passionate commitment. Or desperation. Can we, with our human limitations and inhibitions, even hope to live this in any kind of sustainable way?

That is precisely the challenge. It’s being willing to take risks. To focus on the goal. And to drive away from all distractions and easy ways out.

The race car driver’s sole passion is to complete the course as quickly as possible—wide open, foot to the floor, pedal to the metal. Lap times are measured in thousandths of a second. How will our Christian lives be measured? Would that we could live so passionately for the purposes of God.

And then brake! Later, we began to contemplate the purpose of braking. It’s in the curves! The race car driver must not hesitate, but accelerates, going fast and faster. Going fast is easy on the straightaway. The secret to a fast lap is being

We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open space of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

smooth through the turns. He brakes at the last possible moment, slowing the car, down-shifting, and steering into the turn. Just after reaching the turn’s apex, the driver is full on the gas and wide open until the next turn.

You don’t have to drive a race car to enjoy this thrill on a smaller scale. Here on the East Coast, many of us encounter winding “back” roads in our everyday travels. When your car works well and you know the road, you can exceed the speed limit and know just the amount of braking needed to gracefully take the curves. Long, straight roads are, well, just boring!

Many other sports also utilize this wide open/braking phenomenon, such as horseback riding. Whether riding competitively or for pleasure, the rider and the horse can experience

a oneness in movement that is freeing and exhilarating.

So “wide open till you see God” doesn’t mean living in a reckless, brake-less state. Rather, it calls us to use our “brakes” appropriately to achieve swift, forward movement toward and with God—joyfully! It gives new meaning to “there is no shadow of turning with Thee.” It’s living as the Apostle Paul describes in Romans 5:1-5 (*The Message*):

“By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that’s not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open space of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

“There’s more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we’re never left feeling short-changed. Quite the contrary—we can’t round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!”

So what kind of driver are you, as it pertains to your Christian life? Are you pursuing a “wide open till you see God” philosophy for your life? Or are you tapping the brakes with regular frequency and habit, perhaps even on the straightaway?

This “wide open till you see God, then brake” discipline also applies to the church. If your congregation is blessed to have

even a few “wide-open” people, do they often experience the downward drag of the rest who have a collective, heavy hand on the emergency brake? What are we missing if we are not a “wide open till we see God” kind of congregation? It could make all the difference between being a missional church or a maintenance church.

Wide-open faith . . . wide-open prayer . . . wide-open service . . . till we see God. The analogies abound, and we hope they will engage your imagination, too. Brothers and sisters, start your engines! 🚗

Sharon K. Williams is a senior consultant with Design For Ministry and a worship leader at Nueva Vida Norristown (Pa.) New Life Mennonite Church. David Wolfe is a member of Madison Avenue Church of the Brethren in York, Pa.

“It is because of God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ that unity is possible among Christians, among churches, among peoples of different cultures.”

—the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, speaking at the 19th World Methodist Conference in South Korea in July

“Religious warfare brings out the worst in people. Religious fanaticism is one of the thorniest aspects of the problem, and this is where our efforts should focus if we want the world to change.”

—Patriarch Bartholomeos I, Archbishop of Constantinople, speaking at an interreligious conference in Kazakhstan (WCC News Service)

“It’s uttered, heard, and sometimes lost. But it is the mystery of preaching that it survives, and that it has survived so much of our bad preaching.”

—well-known preacher the Rev. Gardner C. Taylor, speaking on the PBS show “Religion & Ethics Newsweekly”

“Noise is good. I feel like a quiet church is a dead church. It’s probably why I’m not a Quaker—I’d be humming.”

—General Board member Frank Ramirez, from Everett, Pa., speaking at a worship service during the fall General Board meetings

“Racism begins in the mind, and it’s there that it must be stopped.”

—Annual Conference moderator Belita Mitchell, leading an insight session on intercultural issues

“All war, though sometimes used to overcome a greater evil, is contrary to the will of God, and an affront to God’s creation. If scripture is our guide, then we are called to seek peace (Matt. 5:9) and to turn our swords into plowshares (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3-4).”

—from a NCC statement related to the war in Iraq

CULTUREVIEW

• **Minimum wage hikes** won in every state they were on the ballot in November, winning by a resounding 76 percent in Missouri, 73 percent in Montana, 69 percent in Nevada, 66 percent in Arizona, 56 percent in Ohio, and 53 percent in Colorado. (NCC News)

• In a September 2006 *USA Today*/ABC News/Kaiser Family Foundation poll, 80 percent of Americans surveyed said they are **dissatisfied with the cost of health care** in the United States; 54 percent said they were “dissatisfied with the quality of care in this country.”

• **Clare J. Chapman** begins as National Council of Churches deputy general secretary for administration and finance this month. Her selection was approved by the governing board and affirmed by the General Assembly of the NCC and Church World Service at its meeting this fall in Orlando.

• **Mennonite Central Committee** executive director Robb Davis resigned in November citing internal governance and structural issues, according to an MCC release. Lowell Detweiler stepped in as short-term acting executive director while an interim director was sought.

• **Loren L. Johns** has been appointed New Testament editor

for the Believers’ Church Bible Commentary series by the editorial council. He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament from Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary. Johns will begin this work July 1, when he completes his work as dean at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

• During fiscal year 2006, a total of 4,779 **refugees were resettled** in the United States under Church World Service (CWS) auspices, according to the CWS “Welcome” newsletter.

• Americans **cannot be easily characterized as conservative or liberal** on today’s most pressing social questions, according to a recent survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. They are conservative in opposing gay marriage and gay adoption, liberal in favoring embryonic stem cell research, and a little of both on abortion. The full results can be viewed at www.pewforum.org.

• The House of Representatives rejected a **constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage** during the past session, following hours of fiery debate. Although the amendment garnered 236 votes, it fell short of the two-thirds majority needed for passage.

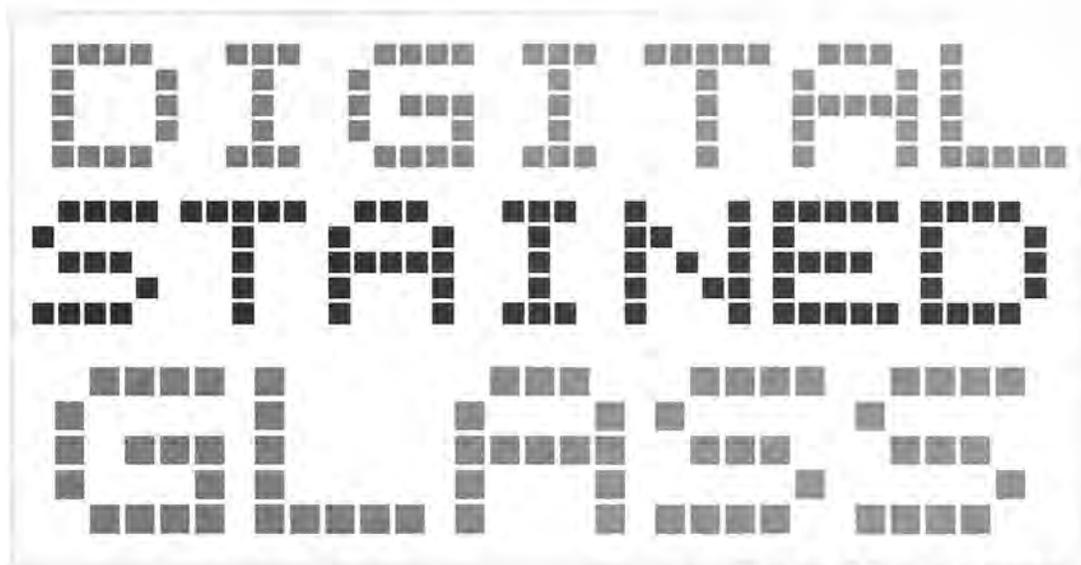


JUST FOR FUN: PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

WHO SAID IT? Five of the six quotes below are attributed to Martin Luther King Jr., the former civil rights leader whose birthday is observed on Jan. 15 this year as a US holiday. Which of the quotes was not uttered by King? Answer printed below.

1. “A man who won’t die for something is not fit to live.”
2. “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.”
3. “All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem.”
4. “Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.”
5. “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
6. “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

ANSWER: Quote No. 4 was spoken by Mahatma Gandhi, not Martin Luther King Jr.



by David Sollenberger

SOME BRETHREN CONGREGATIONS USE TECHNOLOGY TO WIDEN THEIR WITNESS

Is the traditional “talking head” the most effective way to present the gospel? Is the printed word the only way to share information and motivate people to become closer to God? If the King James Bible was good enough for Jesus and his disciples to read from, why should we even consider any other form of sharing God’s word? If we watch entertainment on TV, does everything we watch on TV then become entertainment?

Those questions—well, some of them, at least—are confronting Church of the Brethren congregations. Struggle is often necessary for growth, and, fortunately for the future of the Church of the Brethren, many congregations are struggling with how to make their worship service more meaningful, challenging, effective, and relevant. How can they effectively communicate the message of Christ in an increasingly complex world?

Not content (unlike some) to operate in a maintenance existence, these congregations are exploring factors that could create new creatures in Christ. At the heart of the struggle is how much and what forms of technology to use, both to enhance discipleship of the current membership and to reach the unchurched multitudes outside their gathering.

The screen test

A primary issue centers around projecting words, images, and moving pictures to the congregation in a way that can involve, lead, and engage them. For some congregations, it starts (and sometime ends) with using a mid-20th-century

technology, the overhead projector, which reflects words onto either a portable screen on a blank wall somewhere in the sanctuary.

The desire to sing songs that are not in the official “Brethren hymnal” has led many congregations to use overhead projectors during worship. But lately, most overhead projectors have been replaced by video projectors, which have dropped in price over the last decade. Pastors and worship leaders increasingly recognize that they can now project more than just words of praise songs; scriptures, key points of a sermon, excerpts of videos and DVDs, images of artwork, and photographs are all now at a pastor’s disposal, limited only by one’s creativity and preparation time. Is this a good thing? Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren senior pastor Paul Munday thinks so.

“Everywhere else a parishioner turns during the course of their week it’s a multi-sensory experience, in terms of imagery,” Munday says. “And in a multi-generational church, it’s hard to connect with people unless you’re using multiple forms of communication. We’ve been pleasantly surprised that the more veteran members of the church, including the older members, like the screens.”

At Frederick, the lyrics of songs used in the contemporary service and hymns used during the two traditional services are also projected in addition to key phrases of the sermon, scripture texts, and some DVD excerpts. Munday at first resisted projecting words of hymns but was overruled by his congregation.



Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren has invested in technological infrastructure to use new tools in its sanctuary for worship.

"The older members like the screens," he notes, "because the words are enlarged when we show the scripture or the hymns." Many people familiar with the tunes of hymns, he says, follow the screens instead of getting out the hymn books. Any chorister can testify to the improved sound that results when singers' heads are not buried in their music.

At the Modesto (Calif.) congregation's worship service, a large screen in the sanctuary displays scrolling announcements before and after the service, and is regularly used by co-pastors Erin and Russ Matteson to project key points of the sermon, video clips, photographs, and other text, according to Sandra Franklin, a member of Modesto's worship and spiritual life commission. It's been very well accepted, according to Franklin, who says her two children, ages 10 and 12, pay especially close attention when the presentation includes something shown on the screen.

"That's the medium that the youth are used to," she says. "It's more attention-grabbing. It really opens up the possibility for people to think about their faith in new ways, and to

"Everywhere else a parishioner turns during the course of their week it's a multi-sensory experience, in terms of imagery. And in a multi-generational church, it's hard to connect with people unless you're using multiple forms of communication."

—Paul Munday, Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren

make deeper real-life connections. It can help the pastors make points that they're making more effectively by doing it visually." The use of images speaks to people who are visual learners, she says, as opposed to hearers.

A changing world

Both Frederick and Modesto have projection

systems that are installed into the church infrastructure, a process that can involve thousands of dollars' worth of capital investment. However, a less expensive, portable projection system also can work.

The Chiques congregation (Manheim, Pa.) has been using an overhead to project the words to songs, and had been borrowing or renting a projector and laptop computer when members wanted to show a video or use a PowerPoint presentation during worship. However, the congregation just recently voted to invest in a system that will be permanently installed. Chorister Carolyn Fitzkee says a group of young adults brought the proposal, feeling that the technology would help open up the possibilities for more creative worship.



Dupont (Ohio) Church of the Brethren uses a mounted projector and pull-down screen to display announcements before the worship service.

It's not about entertainment

One of the criticisms of using commercial video clips during a worship service is the fear that a sermon will degenerate into entertainment, something Munday cautions against.

"You can cross the line into entertainment," Munday warns, "especially using movie clips. And it's hard in a multi-generational church to find a movie that everybody identifies with.

They're not universally watched by everybody. We don't want worship to be entertainment."

At the small, rural Mill Creek congregation in Tryon, N.C., relatively new pastor Noel Naff created a unique way to describe the use of their projector, laptop, and DVD player, in an attempt to rename the technology. Coining a Greek word for "praising another way," the congregation at Mill Creek refers to *chaliph* (pronounced "cah-leph") whenever the projector is used in the church. When they want to project the words to a song or litany during worship, Naff will say, "direct your attention to chaliph," and people know to look toward the screen. Mill Creek offers a blended service, using the software program "Media Shout" to project words of hymns that are used with the piano or organ, and the pro-

While she says the primary use will be to better display words of songs, she predicts some of the ministers might use it to illustrate their sermons. Chiques uses a free ministry church model, and several of the ministers who rotate preaching responsibilities use PowerPoint and projectors in their work, she says. Fitzkee reports that there is little objection to the use of technology during a worship service, even in one of the more conservative churches in the denomination.

"We're in the midst of a changing world," she says.

Using portable technology is nothing new at the Community of Joy congregation in Salisbury, Md., a relatively new congregation that meets in a local school, where all the furniture is set up and torn down each week. Co-pastor Martin Hutchison says their congregation uses a portable screen, laptop, and projector to show images related to the theme of the service.

"I see it as a digital stained glass," he says. "Every service for us has a metaphor, and the metaphor is projected through images on the screen. And if there's a key word or something,

that gets projected. Occasionally there will be a couple verses of scripture, but our service is mostly image-driven, and some weeks I'll have 10 slides, some weeks I'll have two." Hutchison has taken a Photoshop course and often downloads royalty-free stock images from the Internet to help illustrate points of the service. He also uses the projector to show clips of movies that help illustrate a sermon point.

"While music is the language of the heart," he says, "movies are the medium of the day, especially for youth and young adults." Community of Joy gears its service for a younger audience, so Hutchison says he consults increasingly with resources that use videos to teach biblical truths, such as the book *Movie Based Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* or the "Videos That Teach" series by Doug Fields.

"I see it as a digital stained glass. Every service for us has a metaphor, and the metaphor is projected through images on the screen. And if there's a key word or something, that gets projected." —Martin Hutchison, Community of Joy congregation in Salisbury, Md.

gram "I Worship" for praise songs, which features a pre-recorded accompaniment, images, and video, along with words on the screen. For Naff, the reward is increased comprehension.

"At first, it was distracting," he says, "hard to run and hard for me, because I wasn't used to preaching and looking at the screen at the same time. But now it's second nature. Now you get so many comments, because we're in a generation that learns visually. They say, 'Oh, I get it now.' You see them going, 'Ah,' and that's wonderful to see."

The congregation uses *chaliph* to project prints of church activities, images to accompany choir anthems, calls to worship that are designed with images, words, and music, and monthly movie nights for youth of the community (shown on an outside wall), followed by a discussion time. In addition to

older members' comments about how much easier they can now see the words to songs, Naff notes widespread appreciation for this new technology among the congregation.

"The key was working with the deacons to bring this upon the church. They were wary of it at first, but by faith and prayer they made it happen, and they love it. They've made comments like, 'Now we don't know what to do without it.' It's truly been a blessing for the church."

Mill Creek and other congregations pay a fee for a CCVI license, which grants them permission to show Hollywood-produced movies, similar to the way a CCLI license allows churches to reprint words of songs.

A license is not required to show a video or DVD produced by a Church of the Brethren-related agency or many other ministries. In addition, more and more resources are being produced in shorter lengths, suited for "moment for mission"-type use during a service, or to illustrate meditation times, such as during musical selections. The recently released documentary *Food and Clothing, Cattle and Love: The Story of Brethren Service after World War 2*, for example, included a 4-minute, youth-oriented music video version of the program, which describes this era of Brethren history in images, text, and short testimonies.

In April 2006, Tim Harvey, pastor of the Roanoke (Va.) Central congregation, led a combined service for several congregations in the Roanoke area. He located a projector and screen and showed images from the Global Food Crisis Fund DVD *Seeds of the Kingdom* during the choir anthem, along with a short series of images of General Board ministries as the offering was being collected, as a way of putting a human face on the ministries of the church. He found it very effective, and reported that one of his members later said, "I never thought I'd say this, but I think we need to get a screen."



Cheryl Burnbaugh-Carford

Roanoke (La.) Church of the Brethren pastor James Balmer demonstrates his congregation's projection TV system used to display words and images along with an accompaniment recording for praise songs during worship.

DVDs TO CONSIDER

Some Church of the Brethren-related DVDs that may be appropriate for use in worship:

- *Food and Clothing, Cattle and Love: Brethren Service after World War 2*, music video, 2006
- *How Do We Respond?*, video collage of Church of the Brethren ministres, 2006
- *Seeds of the Kingdom*, photo collage of Global Food Crisis Fund response, 2005
- *Passing on the Gfift: Heifer International's Mission to End World Hunger*, 3-minute version, 2004
- *For Such a Time as This*, Paul Grout's 7-minute race through the Bible, 2002
- *Stations of the Resurrection*, each station can be viewed separately (3 to 4 minutes each), 2001
- *On Earth Peace - 30 Years*, overview of OEP's ministry, 2005
- *Bearing One Another's Burdens*, overview of Association of Brethren Caregivers ministries, 2003

For more information or to purchase, visit www.brethrenpress.com or call Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.

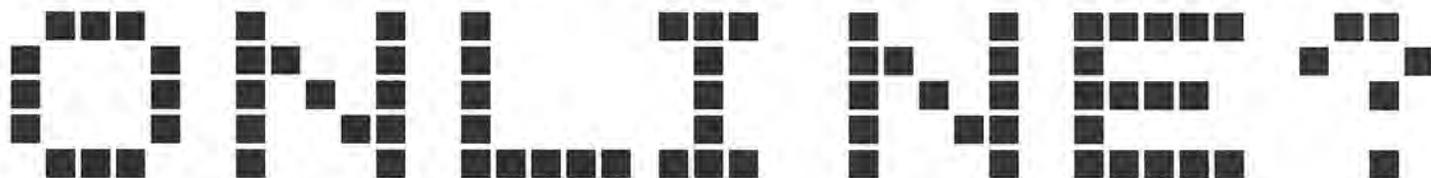
A technological Reformation

It's been said that the original Protestant Reformation was technology-driven. The technology of that day, the printing press, allowed the word of God to be shared in a way that revolutionized the church. The new technology that is sweeping across the North American church—new, smaller projectors that can accept a computer signal, desktop publishing, digital photography, consumer access to video and DVD production, instant Internet downloading of everything from photos to moving video to information—has created new options for presenting the gospel to a world that has become accustomed to processing information by watching and seeing, not just by hearing.

Using new technology in the church is not the sole path to church growth and vitality. In many ways, its importance is dwarfed by the existence of a community of faith marked by hospitality, love, excitement, and challenge, where the Holy Spirit moves people's lives. But using all the tools available might just help create a place where small reformations can happen, person by person, as points of a sermon are illustrated, as ministries of the church come to life through moving pictures, as the faith of the saints are shared through words and images, as the songs of God's people are sung, all helping mold us into more faithful and effective ministers for Jesus Christ. **W**

David Sollenberger is a professional video producer located in Annville, Pa., and a former member of the Church of the Brethren General Board. He is a member of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren.

HOW FAR CAN CHURCHES GO



by Sheila Jacobs

'VIRTUAL CHURCH' MAY BE ENTRY POINT, BUT LACKS TRUE COMMUNITY

The Internet is a revolutionary new communications space of fascinating diversity. It reflects the richness of real life, with some of its truths but many of its half-truths (and untruths!), too. As a virtual place, it poses a particular conundrum to churches and the extent to which "church" can happen within a virtual world.

It all depends on how one defines "church." Christians would probably describe it as the collective body of Christ, gathering together to praise God, taking part in the sacraments and the form of service enjoyed in their chosen fellowship. So can that reality be extended to a "virtual" community in cyberspace?

In this age of the Internet, many churches advertise their services and events online. That is pretty normal, and church webpages have become the equivalent of posters in public spaces. But what about complete Christian communities that exist only online; can these truly be called "church"? Could it be that the church is transforming itself so that whole communities, linked only in cyberspace, will be the new denominations of the 21st century? After all, we bank online, we shop online. Can we effectively "do church" online, too? Or is church different?

Part of being involved in a local church is the personal interaction, friendship, and support of like-minded people. It could be argued that cyber-churches are seeking to provide this both for those who have no experience of church—or the gospel—and for those who are disillusioned with organized Christianity.

For whatever reason, there are numerous people for whom traditional church no longer seems relevant; many of

them feel more comfortable surfing the 'net than they would if invited to visit their local place of worship. So is church transforming itself to meet a need? Is cyber-church an effective substitute or replacement for the traditional community? Or is it an "extra"?

So what's out there?

The Church of England has set up www.i-church.org, under the auspices of the diocese of Oxford. The goal is to "provide a Christian community for people who want to explore Christian discipleship but are not able to belong to a local congregation." The approach seeks to create an online community adapted to those who travel or require more support than they receive from their own worshipping community. Online communities "can be loving and generous and supportive," says Alyson Leslie, a lay pastor appointed to run the project.

Church of Fools (www.churchoffools.com) must be one of the most ingenious ideas for cyber-church. A 3-D "virtual church" where visitors can take on a cartoon form, walk about, sit in pews, explore, and so on, Church of Fools is an extension of irreverent shipoffools.com, "the magazine of Christian unrest."

Initially running from May to August 2004 as a three-month experiment, it gathered an online congregation from around the world. Although the site is operational today, it is currently only up and running on a sole visitor basis; the multi-user basis is expected in due course—funds permitting. Visitors can kneel, cross themselves, and do a "hallelujah," with both hands raised high, head thrown back. They



Church of Fools (www.churchoffools.com) is 3-D "virtual church" where visitors can take on a cartoon form, walk about, sit in pews, and explore.

also can visit a bulletin board and pray for each other.

A US-based site, www.alphachurch.org, claims to be "a full online Christian global church." There are Bible studies and prayer groups and discussions, and visitors can e-mail the pastor for confession and absolution. Worship services are provided, with sound. One can even take holy communion, receive baptism, and be married! For taking online communion the visitor is invited to get something to drink as well as something to eat, to listen to a recorded communion service during which the elements are blessed, and finally to eat and drink them.

A good second-best?

The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) last year held a symposium titled "e-Commerce, e-Bay and e-God?," a reflection of growing interest in online communications within church communities. Tom Brok, the organizer of the event, commented that in future there might well be a new kind of "membership" of churches in Germany, a special web congregation where people could keep in contact with each other and share their problems or discuss their personal aims.

Matt Rich, from the Internet Mission, believes that cyber-church is "a good second-best" and has positive aspects. But in his opinion, one of the disadvantages must be that although the cyber-Christian can be involved in quite a few elements of church life, the community aspect is limited; church is about serving others, giving and receiving, being challenged and challenging—and that's hard to do virtually.

Stephen Goddard, co-editor of *Church of Fools*—whose official lead sponsor is the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom—quotes the Rev. Jonathan Kerry, the church's coordinating secretary for worship and learning: "Methodism's 18th-century founder, John Wesley, said: 'The world is my parish,' and 300 years later that parish includes cyberspace as well." For Kerry, "visiting and worshiping in the Church of Fools has been challenging and uplifting and made us think again about what are the essentials of being a church. Bricks-and-mortar churches will continue, but now supplemented by online Christian communities."

The Internet "can be of tremendous benefit to churches in their difficult mission at the dawn of the 21st century," affirm Jean-Nicholas Bazin and Jérôme Cottin in their book *Virtual*

Christianity. Churches must be able to have a presence on the 'net, "at the very least to make this new space for social dialogue into a place where authentically human exchanges are encouraged in an ethically fair manner," they say. The churches' response to the Internet challenge is based on the conviction that "the visibility of God is ahead of us and is not within our control."

People are changing, their lives and perceptions are different, and virtual church may be seen as a nonthreatening way for them to start to explore the spiritual dimension to life. . . . But it's questionable as to whether those needs can be met purely online.

Changing

People are changing, their lives and perceptions are different, and virtual church may be seen as a nonthreatening way for them to start to explore the spiritual dimension to life. To meet their need, church is transforming so that it can present the good news of Jesus Christ to those who would never attend church in a building. But it's questionable as to whether those needs can be met purely online.

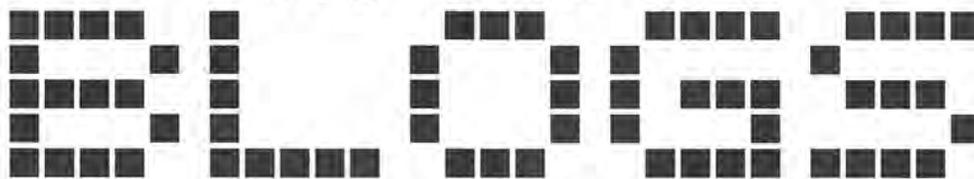
Although they may sometimes seem to complete communities, cyber-churches may perhaps provide a stepping stone or bridge—an introduction to Christianity that ends in "proper" fellowship in a local place of worship. Few would likely claim they were a substitute for "the real thing."

Discussion forums, Bible studies, pastors' messages, reflections, stories, testimonies, and ideas, sharing your faith with those around the world . . . but can believers and seekers have an experience of true, meaningful church online? To that question, Stephen Goddard offers this reply: "We're more concerned about the fact that many of the people coming to Church of Fools are not getting true, meaningful church offline."

That is surely food for thought. 

Sheila Jacobs is a Christian author who attends Elim Pentecostal Church in Braintree, Essex, England. Her latest novel is *Watchers* (Authentic Lifestyle, UK).

GOING TO THE



by Philip E. Jenks

ONLINE JOURNALS HAVE CREATED NEW FORUM FOR RELIGIOUS IDEA EXCHANGE

First it was the mimeograph machine and the Ediphone. Then radio preachers. Then, in rapid succession, the television, desktop computers, e-mail, CDs, and mobile phones.

Almost from the beginning, American theology and church communication have been intricately linked with emerging technologies. Preachers have often sensed God's call to spread the word as loudly and as widely as possible, and many think electronic media are divinely inspired.

The National Council of Churches' (NCC) 2006 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* noted another trend in religious communication—that latest electronic miracle, the web log or “blog”—and considered its influence on the post-modern “emergent church.”

No one knows how many bloggers occupy cyberspace, but chances are a teen or 'tween you know is updating his or her thoughts even now. Blogs are journals or personal diaries that, instead of being hidden in desk drawers, are posted on the Internet for the prying eyes of thousands or even millions of readers. Many blogs are updated daily to record the evolving insights of the blogger. Not every blog is compelling reading, but some blogs have a growing and devoted following, such as Ariana Huffington's www.huffingtonpost.com, for left-leaning viewpoints, or Hugh Hewitt's <http://hughhewitt.com> on the right.

When the Democratic and Republican conventions provided bloggers with press credentials, it was a sign that the blog has become a prominent medium of 21st-century communication. It was probably inevitable, then, that the blog

would become an important tool of the emergent church.

The emergent church is defined by *Yearbook* editor Eileen W. Lindner as a “conversation” (some would say movement) birthed in 20th-century Protestantism and “characterized by a robust, energetic, and growing online and hard-copy literature” that attempts to shape responses to contemporary culture.

Common attributes of the emergent church, Lindner believes, are an emulation of the person and ministry of Jesus, a fondness for anecdotes and stories as means of discovering truth, a focus on mission, and a stress on the centrality of worship, even in experimental forms.

Scores of emergent church proponents are using blogs to advance these ideas and stimulate dialogue. Lindner says it is not possible to generalize them into a pre-

dictable demographic class, but she offers examples of prominent emergent bloggers: John O'Keefe, founder of www.ginkworld.net, “an emerging/postmodern site exploring what it means to be a follower of Jesus in today's world”; Spencer Burke, former pastor, founder of the <http://theooze.com> website, “dedicated to the emerging church culture”; Mark Driscoll, founder of Mars Hill Church (www.marshillchurch.org) in Seattle; and Mark Pearson, founder of www.cityside.org.nz in Auckland, New Zealand.

Emergent church has become so popular among evangelicals that an emergent church track appeared on the agenda of the National Pastors Conference sponsored by Zondervan and InterVarsity.

“Perhaps what has made blog-

What is a blog?

“A weblog (usually shortened to blog, but occasionally spelled web log) is a web-based publication consisting primarily of periodic articles (normally in reverse chronological order). Although most early weblogs were manually updated, tools to automate the maintenance of such sites made them accessible to a much larger population, and the use of some sort of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of ‘blogging.’ ” —Wikipedia

(www.wikipedia.org).

“A shared online journal where people can post diary entries about their personal experiences and hobbies.”

—Princeton University WordNet

THE BLOGOSPHERE

Some blogs that the *2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* cites as being used by emergent church practitioners for communication include the following:

Bible Software Review Weblog—<http://www.bsreview.org/blog/>;
Café Apocalypse—cafeapocalypse.blogspot.com; Christianity Applied—christianity-applied.blogspot.com; Emergesque—faithmaps.blogspot.com;
The Evangelical Outpost—www.evangelicaloutpost.com;
Jesus Creed—www.jesuscreed.org; NCC Interfaith Relations—nccinterfaith.blogspot.com; Religion News Blog—www.religionnews-blog.com; and Think Christian—www.thinkchristian.net.

A few Brethren blogs have also started up, such as “Sauer Grapes,” run by Brethren young adults Travis Poling and Randall Westfall (sauergrapes.blogspot.com) or Brethren Revival Fellowship’s Dunker Journal, administered by Craig Alan Myers (www.brfwitness.org/Journal/Journal.htm).

CHRISTIANITY IN CYBERSPACE

• Jean-Nicolas Bazin and Jérôme Cottin’s book *Virtual Christianity. Potential and Challenge for the Churches* (Geneva, 2004) was published by WCC Publications. For a review of this and other cyberspace-related titles, go to <http://rccs.usfca.edu/booklist.asp>. The WCC book is under “October 2005.”

• Several **Church of the Brethren listserves** exist as a way to virtually connect Brethren with common interests and concerns in an e-mail “forum.” Two of the largest are “COB-L” and “COB-YYA,” with the latter geared toward youth and young adults. Other examples include listserves for deacons, for those interested in disabilities ministry, members of the progressive Voices for an Open Spirit group, and for Brethren history enthusiasts. One list of listserves can be found at www.brethren.org/mrkcoffee.html.

• The Church of the Brethren **denominational website**, www.brethren.org, is a partnership of the various Annual Conference agencies. It includes general information on the denomination and houses sites for the individual agencies.

• Numerous **Church of the Brethren congregations and many districts** have their own websites. Some are listed in the congregational directory found at www.brethren.org/links/FindAChurch.htm. If your congregation or district has a website that is not listed, please send the information to cobweb@brethren.org.

• **“Online communities”** such as MySpace (www.myspace.com), Xanga (www.xanga.com), and Facebook (www.facebook.com) have been gaining popularity rapidly in the past few years. Xanga has a Church of the Brethren youth “ring,” and many Brethren connect through the various sites. A recent news article noted that some ministers are finding these virtual communities a useful ministry tool.

ging particularly interesting to religious people,” Lindner writes, “is that journaling is already a discipline that religious people maintain in significant numbers.” What is new, Lindner says, is that personal meditations can now be “easily and economically shared with a limitless number of others.”

The blog is also becoming an important tactic for institutional communication. The Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, associate general secretary of the NCC for Interfaith Relations, for example, maintains a blog at [\[faith.blogspot.com/\]\(http://faith.blogspot.com/\).](http://nccinter-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

No one knows what future technologies will offer, but Lindner expects blogging “to remain a persistent feature of the religious landscape” for the foreseeable future. Emergent church blogging, she says, will remain on the Internet “so long as questions remain about faith, and people ponder the ultimate questions of life.” **W**

Philip E. Jenks is director of interpretation for the National Council of Churches of Christ USA and oversees website content for the NCC.



Sauer Grapes
(sauergrapes.blogspot.com/)



Dunker Journal
(www.brfwitness.org/Journal/Journal.htm)



Voices for an Open Spirit
(www.brethren.org/mrkcoffee.html)



Courtesy of Brethren History Library & Archives / HICOG

A group of German high school students returned to their home country in October 1950 after a year in the United States through the Brethren-sponsored student exchange program.

A TRUE GIFT EXCHANGE

by William R. Eberly

BRETHREN PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS AIDED RECONCILIATION IN POST-WAR GERMANY

It all began in 1948. That's when John Eberly, an old-time "preacher-teacher" who taught school and was a part-time pastor in several rural churches in northern Indiana, heard Brethren Service Commission director M.R. Zigler issue a call for people to go to Europe to help with relief programs.

John volunteered and was assigned first to Italy and later to Germany. He said, "You have to do more than talk about what you believe. You have to do something to live it, practice it."

He went as a representative of Heifer Project, which distributed animals to needy families. But while in Germany, John developed another interest: bringing German children to America for a year to live with an American family. With his past experience with high school youth, John felt that children ages 16 to 18 would be ideal for such an exchange program. Most authorities thought that was too young, but John insisted it would work.

The church administrators finally agreed, and in the spring of 1949, John set about to organize the program. He went to State Department officials in the US occupation offices in Frankfurt and

made his request to the director: "We'd like to have 50 young people from the refugee camps to spend a year in American homes." And so, from the refugee camps in northern Germany 50 children were selected. From rural southern Germany came another 40 young people, a bit older but still only about 18 years old.

As these German *jugend* and their parents gathered in Bremerhaven, there was no precedent for conducting such a "going-away party." John recalled later, "Here were these parents. I shook hands with them and exchanged greetings, the best I could do in German, and the best they could do in English expressing how much they hoped their daughter or son would be cared for and get along well. It had only been a few years ago that when anyone in the US talked about Germans, they were 'those awful people,' and anywhere in Germany when they talked about the US, they were referring to enemies."

The first 90 youth came to America and were assigned to host homes at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. "To begin with," said John, "it was simply nothing more but the

objective to bring two different people together so they could learn to understand and appreciate the other, and to exchange ideas, whatever they were."

It soon became apparent that the program had great potential for promoting reconciliation and peace. John wrote from Germany, after the first group of students had been placed in their new homes in America, "We are concerned primarily in taking these young people into our homes and communities for one year under the best influences that we have to offer and sending them back to Germany to become leaders in their communities and no doubt in the entire nation." He had no idea then how that prophecy would be fulfilled.

One of the first 90 students to come to America was Gerhard Weiser, an 18-year-old farm boy from Weisloch, in southern Germany. In November 1949, Gerhard came to Roann, Ind., where he lived with the Galen Eiler family, attended school at Roann High School, and participated actively in Roann Church of the Brethren. Eiler was the agriculture teacher at the local school.

Gerhard entered into life in Roann and Wabash County with enthusiasm. He wrote during the year, "I think I can much learn here and when I come back to Germany I can much tell from America and I think the project that can come 90 students to America is indeed a aid for a better understanding between America's and Germany's youth. Pardon me please for my bad write in English, but I think you like better a letter in bad English as a letter in good German. When my write in English is better I write you more from here."

But there was a problem in Roann. Attending the church was a recent war veteran. Glenn had been a paratrooper with the US Army. During the invasion of Germany, he was shot down by German soldiers, was injured, and kept for a time as a prisoner of war in a Nazi prison hospital. When Glenn heard of the coming of a German boy who had been in the Hitler Youth Program to Roann, he was very angry. Glenn stopped coming to church.

The Roann youth class, meanwhile, welcomed Gerhard and made it their task to see that Gerhard learned all he could about life in Wabash County. They also made an effort to see that Glenn got to know Gerhard. After a while, Glenn and his family came back to church. It was clear that a friendship was growing between Glenn and Gerhard.

On the last Sunday of his stay in Roann, Gerhard spoke from the pulpit during the worship hour. He said, among other things, "I cannot ever take up arms to fight the Americans, because I have learned to know and love the Americans." Glenn arose from his seat in the auditorium, came to the front, and gave his own sort of personal testimony about how much it had meant to him to have Gerhard there that year. With many tears throughout the whole church, Gerhard and Glenn embraced each other. That's real reconciliation!

But the story doesn't end there. After Gerhard returned to his home in Weisloch, he introduced new farming practices to his community. He started youth clubs patterned after the Rural Youth Clubs he had seen in Wabash County. It was at one of these satellite clubs he started that he met Johanna, whom he later married. After he moved into his wife's home (customary in rural Germany), he became the *burgermeister* (mayor) of his

new hometown, Mauer, a few miles from Heidelberg.

He also became involved in the government of Baden Wurttemberg state and was elected to the parliament in Stuttgart. He became minister of agriculture, environment, and forestry, heading one of the largest government offices in Stuttgart. He served as vice president, or vice prime minister, of Baden Wurttemberg. He represented his state in the national Bundesrat (comparable to the US Senate) at Bonn. Gerhard was known throughout Germany as a man of integrity and honesty. He played a major role in the uniting of East and West Germany. He has written two books and was given an honorary doctorate.



John Eberly, left center, and a US State Department representative meet with German exchange students at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

"To begin with", said John, "it was simply nothing more but the objective to bring two different people together so they could learn to understand and appreciate the other, and to exchange ideas, whatever they were."

When Gerhard heard of the death of John Eberly, he wrote, "I am very sorry indeed that it was not possible for me to see him once more and to tell him again how all of the exchange students are still very thankful to him for all what he has done for us. In October 1985 we had again a reunion of the exchange students 1949/50 and we were talking about him and his great activities. We will always remember him and never forget what he has done for us. Everybody of our group had a lot more chances after being in America and the most of us used the chances."

The second year (1950-1951), the Brethren High School Exchange Program sponsored 194 students from Germany. Other church bodies and secular organizations developed their own exchange programs. Soon thousands of high school students from Germany and other countries were coming to America, and American youth were going abroad. Interdenominational support for the Brethren program turned it into the International Christian Youth Exchange (later International Cultural Youth Exchange) in 1957, with offices in New York and in many international locations. Former exchangees in Germany formed the "John Eberly Gesellschaft," sort of an alumni association.

A little pebble tossed into a pond creates ripples that move outward farther and still farther. John Eberly could not have foreseen the full impact on the world of his idea to bring German children to America, "to give them some good food... and put them with a farm family." ❧

William R. Eberly, former professor at Manchester College, lives in North Manchester, Ind.



"Jeremiah," detail from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo.

Jeremiah: *Messenger of judgment and hope*

Prophet was called to speak difficult words in wartime

by Robert Neff

When I taught at Bethany Theological Seminary, my favorite course was on the Book of Jeremiah. It has defined my faith and outlook on life.

When I left the seminary in 1977, I asked Dean Egge to create a sculpture of Jeremiah so that I might have a physical representation of the prophet in my office. He took a huge cherry log—into which a hunter had unloaded 12-gauge shotgun shells—and sculpted Jeremiah out of this stressed wood. The finished piece bore the scars of those shots,

emblematic of the burden that the prophet bore for his people. I placed that sculpture in my offices in Elgin, Ill., and Huntingdon, Pa., until I retired in 1998. Jeremiah now resides in the Juniata College library. What was so important about this prophet?

Jeremiah was a wartime prophet, even though he was called at a time of renewal and relative peace under Josiah about 626 BC. Within less than 30 years, however, Judah experienced the first deportation of its population; within less than 40 years Jerusalem, the city with its temple

and royal palace, had been leveled.

Jeremiah bore witness to God's call to faithfulness in a time of patriotic fervor. He accused the people of easy faith, mouthing the words of belief but failing to embody the talk with the walk. Worshipers entered God's sanctuary repeating the words, "The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord," but failed to do justice and protect the oppressed (Jer. 7). For this failure, Jeremiah, under God's direction, prophesied the end of Judah and Jerusalem.

When Babylon threatened Judah and

The general population perceived that Jeremiah was unpatriotic and anti-government. However, these proclamations were not his doing but God's. Jeremiah had been called by God to deliver this message of judgment.

Jerusalem, Jeremiah called for nonresistance and surrender. He was branded a traitor, and the people called for his execution. His own family sought his life because of his preaching (Jer. 11:18ff). From a cistern where he had been left to die, he was rescued by a friend in the king's court (Jer. 38). All through his life, he survived by a slender thread.

The general population perceived that Jeremiah was unpatriotic and anti-government. However, these proclamations were not his doing but God's. Jeremiah had been called by God to deliver this message of judgment. In fact, Jeremiah lamented that he could not hold back these negative words that he had been commissioned to speak (Jer. 20:7-11). In our time we are reminded of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany during World War II.

Because of his rejection and persecution, Jeremiah's life is often compared to the life of Jesus. It is true that in this book,

more than in any other prophetic witness, we find the voice of lament and suffering. These confessions are captured in the prayers of Jeremiah (11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). Out of this life of prayer and devotion, Jeremiah became the father of Jewish spirituality. This book was read by exiles who experienced rejection and oppression as refugees, living in a foreign land. Those who had called for his execution now used his experience to assist them in facing the difficulties of their own persecution and rejection.

Jeremiah models devotion to God in the most extreme circumstance. These prayers are filled with angry complaint and hold nothing back. These laments carry the authenticity of a person who experiences distress and accusation even though the lamenter has done nothing wrong.

And yet Jeremiah provides a witness for great hope, as we find in the Book of Consolation (Jer. 30-31). He provided

comfort to the first exiles in a letter that encouraged them to settle down in Babylon and pray for the welfare of the city where they now lived (Jer. 29). At the time of the siege of Jerusalem, when property values plummeted, Jeremiah bought a field at full price to indicate his faith in the future restoration of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer. 32). Jeremiah could see the reality of judgment and at the same time believe that God was not finished with Judah and Israel.

God's purpose in judgment is not punitive, but redemptive. 

Robert Neff has served on the Bethany Theological Seminary faculty, as president of Juniata College, and as general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board. He is currently on the staff of The Village at Morrisons Cove in Martinsburg, Pa. He lives in Alexandria, Pa.

MESSENGER'S "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in February: Lamentations, by Christina Bucher.

JEREMIAH: A CLOSER LOOK

Background: Jeremiah prophesied between 626 and 582 BC. The book had many versions, and the Greek text is one-eighth shorter than the Hebrew text. Jeremiah 36 testifies to the growth of the text.

Key texts: "I will make a new covenant . . . and I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31-34, cited in Luke and the Pauline writings). Matthew's Gospel, in 2:18, quotes Jeremiah 31:15: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children."

Districts deal with divisions

Sexuality, authority of scripture are key issues

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Divisions over issues of sexuality, the authority of scripture, and related issues have surfaced in recent months in at least three districts in the Church of the Brethren. The districts of South/Central Indiana, Northern Plains, and Illinois/Wisconsin are dealing with the divisions in different ways.

South/Central Indiana District

South/Central Indiana has attempted a process of dialogue in response to Manchester Church of the Brethren, an "open and affirming" (welcoming of all, regardless of sexual orientation) congregation in North Manchester, Ind., according to executive minister Allen Kahler. However, district meetings for dialogue and discussion have not healed divisions.

Instead, on Oct. 21, a specially called district conference responded to Manchester's holding of a same-sex covenant ceremony by deciding to sanction any church that holds a covenant service in the future. Attempts to amend the recommendation failed, and it passed by a two-thirds majority. The decision was not retroactive, and Manchester is not under sanction at this time.

The action of the district conference, recommended by the district board, stated that a congregation "that allows a same-sex covenant service on church property or with the assistance of church ministerial leadership will have a three-year moratorium placed upon their participation in elected and appointed district offices, including seating delegates at district conference."

A congregation under sanction also will be required to "submit" to follow-up actions, possibly including work with the district board, On Earth Peace's Ministry of Reconciliation, and the Annual Conference Council, and will be directed to suspend holding covenant services on church property or with the assistance of the church's ministers.

The conflict in the district has been brewing for many years, beginning as

early as 1996 when Manchester decided officially to become open and affirming. The congregation's decision-making process included a lengthy study of sexuality from a biblical and scientific perspective. With 605 members, Manchester is by far the largest congregation in the district—the next largest has 264 members (statistics from the 2006 *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*).

In 2002, the district sent a query to Annual Conference, which was answered in 2004 by the paper "Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions." (For the full answer to the query see www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/2004DisagreeAC.html.)

The district also created an advisory council that included members from Manchester. The council functioned for a year or more, Kahler said, and attempted to find a way to have conversation between differing groups, helped keep the district board apprised of the situation, and helped care for the situation of conflict while the district board continued to do the regular business of the district.

Then came news of the same-sex covenant ceremony at Manchester in October 2005. District leaders met with leaders of the congregation. A series of written communications between the congregation and the district board followed, and the board also received communications from other congregations about the issue.

A final letter from the district board to the Manchester congregation, sent earlier this year, was perceived by the district and the congregation in very different ways, according to Kahler: it was per-

ceived by the district board as a statement of last steps in the process. Annual Conference has outlined in the event of congregational disagreement, but may have been perceived by the congregation as a threat, he said.

On June 11, Manchester reaffirmed its open and affirming position in a congregational business meeting. It communicated that commitment in a letter to the district board, also requesting that the district engage in a process of reconciliation. The district board, however, responded by making its recommendation to sanction congregations, and scheduled the specially called conference.

Northern Plains District

In Northern Plains, "our board is trying to deal with this in a way that we actually talk with each other," said former executive minister Connie Burkholder, in an interview conducted before she left the position in October. Divisive issues for the district are not just about sexuality, but also the authority of scripture, Jesus Christ as the only savior, and disagreement over use of funds.

Another concern, Burkholder said, is whether new church projects will welcome homosexuals without expecting them to change. Open Circle Church of the Brethren in Burnsville, Minn., one of the newest congregations in the district, has become a focal point for the concerns.

A decision by the district board to give a loan—taken in part from money gained in the sale of Camp Mon-Dak—to Open Circle to pay off its mortgage factored into the situation. Brethren in the area of the camp had relinquished claim to the camp property, although some still felt connect-

READ MORE

Other relevant Annual Conference statements include:

- "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective," 1983, www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/83HumanSexuality.htm
- "Biblical Inspiration and Authority," 1979, www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/79BiblicalInspiration%26Authority.htm
- "The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice," 1998, www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/98NewTestament.htm

ed with the camp, said Burkholder.

Six congregations have sent letters of concern to the district. One was framed as queries for district conference. The district also has received communications from "people at the opposite end of the theological perspective," Burkholder said, including a letter from Open Circle explaining its viewpoint.

The district board invited congregations to a day of prayer in mid-May, outlining in the invitation the main issues it perceived. The board also began planning for a district face-to-face conversation.

That gathering took place Oct. 7-8 at Camp Pine Lake. The focus of discussion related to homosexuality and church leadership, said Tim Button-Harrison, currently serving as interim district executive. "The gathering really was giving members of the district an opportunity to be in respectful conversation with one another, and to both listen and share the range of views represented in our district," he said. More than 150 people attended, representing most of the congregations.

The district has benefited from the gathering "to bring us together as the church and prayerfully listen and share with one another," Button-Harrison said. Also, the district board has received a 15-page document of participant feedback to the gathering, including individual responses and some group responses from congregations. The feedback ranged from appreciation and benefits gained for the district, to identification of frustrations and disappointments, and ideas for what the district board's next steps should be.

Many in the district "desire to work at these issues in a different kind of way that is upbuilding of the church and honors the variety of ways of understanding that are in our churches," Button-Harrison said. "We feel called to draw from the best of who we are to model another way."

Illinois/Wisconsin District

Leaders in Illinois/Wisconsin have been working in several ways to hold together congregations in very different places on issues of human sexuality. The efforts have included visits to all congregations by the district moderator, an invitation for congregations to respond to a draft of a "district covenant," and a time for open prayer for concerns of the district at this year's district conference.

The district has been in conversation about issues of sexuality for more than two years. The district includes three congregations that are "open and affirming" or have statements of welcome for people of all sexual orientations.

In June 2004, five congregations proposed a query titled "The Church of the Brethren Position on Homosexuality and Lesbianism." The query was received during a year of transition in the district. The district's transition team attempted a series of meetings with representatives or members of the five congregations, then determined the query was not made in proper form. The five congregations reframed and resubmitted the query, and five more congregations joined the original group.

After several months of study, a district study team determined the query had already been answered by Annual Conference. The query was returned along with a detailed response providing information that supported the answers to the query, according to Kevin Kessler, who was called as district executive minister beginning Jan. 1.

District leaders are continuing conver-

sation with the 10 southern congregations, which have not resubmitted the query and have not filed a formal grievance with the district, and with the open and affirming Springfield (Ill.) congregation, also in the southern half of the district. Astoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, however, has sent a letter of grievance directly to the Annual Conference officers.

District leaders have tried to be very careful in responding to the query, to the 10 congregations that brought it, and to the Springfield congregation, said former district executive minister Jim Yaussy Albright, who resigned in August. "The study team was balanced, (including) people who think homosexuality is a sin and those who do not," he said. In its dealings with Springfield, the district has been equally careful, and has tried to follow the latest Annual Conference guidelines.

"Christ made us brothers and sisters," Albright said. "We didn't choose it. We are covenanted to deal with each other despite the differences." ■

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is director of news services for the Church of the Brethren General Board. She is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.



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General Board sets budget, discusses immigration and stem cell research

At its fall meetings Oct. 20-23 in Elgin, Ill., the General Board finalized a 2007 budget, issued a pastoral letter on immigration, considered a study paper on stem cell research, and recommended joining Christian Churches Together in the USA. The board also received a report about new Sudan mission work and an interim report from a committee exploring options for the Brethren Service Center, among other business.

Daily worship services and frequent prayer and hymn-singing marked the meetings. A prayer by board chair Jeff Neuman-Lee gave a sense of the overall tone of the gathering: "O God, you put a lot on our plate, and we rejoice in it."

Budget

A 2007 budget of \$9,741,900 was approved, representing all ministries of the General Board including self-funded ministries. Matched against budgeted income for 2007, the figure anticipates a net expense of \$12,800 for the year.

Pastoral letter on immigration

The board issued a pastoral letter on welcoming the stranger, sparked in part by a US congressional session that featured immigration as a top domestic issue. "In the midst of debating economic and political issues, we who follow Jesus are called to speak out on behalf of those who live, work, worship, and reside among us without legal protections. More than that, we are to love them," the letter said.

The letter (available in English and Spanish at www.brethren.org/genbd/clm/clt/) encourages Brethren to be in conversation about immigration issues and to love neighbors as all people are loved, equally in the eyes of God, even if they are labeled as "aliens," "illegal," or "undocumented." Among scrip-

tural passages, Leviticus 19 was referenced, highlighting God's call to make sure that strangers in our midst have food to feed their families. The 1982 Annual Conference statement on undocumented persons and refugees was lifted up as a helpful resource.

Christian Churches Together

The board approved a recommendation for Church of the Brethren participation in Christian Churches Together in the USA, agreeing to join with the Committee on Interchurch Relations (CIR) in recommending to Annual Conference that the denomination become a full participant.

Michael Hostetter, CIR chair, explained that Christian Churches Together would not replace the church's membership in the National Council of Churches. The new organization is an attempt to foster ecumenical interaction that also includes those not involved in the NCC, such as the Roman Catholic Church, evangelical and pentecostal communions, and the National Association of Evangelicals (for more, go to www.christianchurchestogether.org).

Stem cell research study

A document on stem cell research was received as a work in process. The document was called for by an action of the board last year, and is a joint document with the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC). General Board members expressed affirmation for the work done so far, but also asked for more attention to balance. The board recommended to ABC that the two agencies disseminate the document to the denomination as a study guide.

The study paper provides scientific background, a discussion of the ethics surrounding the issue, scriptural and theological information, case studies, and study questions. It was prepared by a small committee including Del Keeney, executive director of Congregational Life Ministries; former ABC staff member Scott Douglas; Joel Eikenberry,



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

General Board chair Jeff Neuman-Lee led devotions to open executive committee meetings of the board. This was Neuman-Lee's first board meeting as chair.

PERSONNEL MOVES

• **Tim Button-Harrison** was named interim executive minister of Northern Plains District, through at least Dec. 31. He has served as pastor of Church of the Brethren congregations in Northern Plains, most recently Ivester Church of the Brethren in Grundy Center, Iowa. He also brings broad district experience to the position, including service as a district board member, moderator, coordinator for Training in Ministry, and Standing Committee member. He holds degrees from

Manchester College, the University of Iowa, and Bethany Theological Seminary.

• **Kevin L. Kessler** has been called to a half-time position as executive minister of Illinois/Wisconsin District, effective Jan. 1. Since 1993, he has served as pastor of Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, where he will continue to pastor half-time. He completed the Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) program at Canton, was ordained in 1997, and is working towards an associate

degree in science at Spoon River College. He has served as a district board member, including a term as chair, and has chaired the district transition team. He also has 17 years of experience in the banking and finance industry.

• **Jim Kinsey**, a member of the General Board's Congregational Life Team for Areas 2 and 4, has announced his retirement from full-time ministry effective Jan. 2. He began work for the General Board in 1994, becoming full-

time in 2000. He has done a wide variety of work for Congregational Life Ministries, with a particular passion for small church and rural ministries and building healthy congregational systems. He also has served in several other roles denominationally, including sharing the role of interim co-director of Ministry, and 17 years of service as executive minister of Michigan District. He also has pastored Brethren congregations in Michigan and Ohio.

Jan. 13-Feb. 11
General Board Nigeria
workcamp

Jan. 16 Church of the
Brethren Credit Union
 board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Jan. 28-Feb. 16
Brethren Volunteer
Service Unit 273 orienta-
 tion, Gotha, Fla.

Jan. 28-Feb. 2 Council
of District Executives
 meeting, Daytona
 Beach, Fla.

Feb. 4 General Board
"Service Sunday"

Feb. 12-16 Sustaining
Pastoral Excellence
National Vital Pastor
Retreat, Clearwater, Fla.

Feb. 16-18 Global
Women's Project
Conference, North
 Manchester, Ind.

Feb. 18-22 Brethren
Volunteer Service sum-
 mer and fall mid-unit
 retreat, Gotha, Fla.

March 9-11 Eastern
Regional Youth
Conference, Juniata
 College, Huntingdon, Pa.

March 10-12 General
Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

March 11 One Great
Hour of Sharing offering

March 16-18
Association of
Brethren Caregivers
 board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

March 16-18
Roundtable Regional
Youth Conference,
 Bridgewater (Va.) College

a physician; Charles Hite, an ethicist; John Katonah, a chaplain; and Marla Ullom Minnich, a physician.

Brethren Service Center committee

In an interim report from the Brethren Service Center Ministry Options Exploration Committee, chair Dale Minnich reviewed the group's first meeting at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

In March, the General Board turned away from a recommendation by the Stewardship of Property Committee to lease or sell the Brethren Service Center, and called instead for an exploration of options for ministry there.

"It's too early to give a preview of recommendations," Minnich said. He did, however, review the general thinking of the committee, saying the group is seeking to be transparent especially with the New Windsor community and staff in order to avoid a "pressure cooker" situation when it presents recommendations.

"It's clear that the big issues that we need to deal

with relate to the (New Windsor) Conference Center," Minnich said. He outlined many options for the conference center, and also some possible ways to improve the financial bottom line for other ministries located at the center.

Other business

Several documents related to the internal organization of the board and its programs were adopted: a new set of vision and mission statements and core values, a conflict of interest policy, a job description for board members, and committee organization for the member development committee. In executive session, the board worked on envisioning for future emphases in a process being called "New Wineskins."

Numerous reports were received, including one on a National Council of Churches trip to Lebanon brought by Thomas Swain, clerk of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. An offering of \$1,680.24 was divided between the Emerging Global Mission Fund and the Sudan mission.

Association of Brethren Caregivers tours Advocate Bethany Hospital

The Association of Brethren Caregivers' executive committee and Wellness Ministry cabinet toured Advocate Bethany Hospital in Chicago prior to the ABC board's fall meetings Sept. 29-30.

ABC has some connections to the former Bethany Hospital, which began in conjunction with Bethany Theological Seminary when the school was located in Chicago. The tour allowed executive committee members to view the hospital's transition from providing general health and emergency care to providing acute long-term care.

The hospital received wide-spread publicity when it announced the move last January. At the ABC Board's previous meeting in March, Church of the Brethren representatives who serve on the governing council of Advocate Bethany met with the board to report on the hospital's reasons for moving to acute long-term care, and how it might better serve its surrounding community.

In other business, the ABC board also approved holding National Older Adult Conference

(NOAC) in 2008 and 2009, ensuring that NOAC and National Youth Conference will no longer fall in the same year; received the "Stem Cell Research Report and Study Guide" from a task force created jointly by ABC and the General Board; heard reports about its ministries and events; and discussed the work of the denomination and ways agencies work together with Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board. Noffsinger was invited to the meetings as part of the ABC board's ongoing review of the vision statement it approved and released to the denomination last fall.

The board also took part in a board development session to evaluate its current make-up, vision, and focus. The session included a component that encourages the board to rethink its future goals and work. The board also accepted Gayle Hunter Sheller's resignation and approved the appointment of Chris Whitacre of McPherson, Kan., to complete her term and represent the western districts. For more about ABC go to www.brethren.org/abc.



Association of Brethren Caregivers board members meeting this fall included: first row from left, Vernne Greiner, Marilyn Bussey, Wally Landes, John Wenger, Allegra Hess, and Tammy Kiser; second row, Bill Cave, Chris Whitacre, Dan McRoberts, John Kinsel, Tim Hissong, John Katonah and Eddie Edmonds. (Not pictured: Dave Fouts.)

Mary Dulabaum

SOUTHERN SUDAN

A visit to Sudan to explore opportunities for new Brethren mission work there received a warm welcome from church leaders and others, reported Bradley Bohrer, who began in September 2006 as director of Sudan mission for the General Board.

The delegation that returned Oct. 4 from a four-day trip to southern Sudan included Bohrer, former mission worker Louise Baldwin Rieman, and Global Mission Partnerships executive director Merv Keeney.

The group spent time in Nairobi, Kenya, and Rumbek, Sudan, visiting with officials of the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), various churches, local government offices, and assistance organizations. They met with possible partners for the mission effort—an initiative approved by the General Board in October 2005—and identified possible locations for placing mission workers.

Bohrer described the mission as two-fold: seeking to help rebuild and heal the community after years of war, and also to form churches. He highlighted the great amount of work needed just to rebuild the infrastructure of southern Sudan, an area virtually destroyed by the country's civil war. (War



Sudan mission director Bradley Bohrer, center right, visited with a group of women and children during a recent trip to the African nation.

Louise Rieman

still continues in the Darfur region in western Sudan.)

The southern Sudanese and their church leaders are welcoming this Church of the Brethren mission work, Bohrer said. "It's important to remember that we've been in Sudan since 1980," he said. At least 16 Brethren mission workers have served in Sudan since 1980, and the General Board also has supported three staff of the New Sudan Council of Churches.

"We are not starting the work of Jesus Christ in Sudan," Bohrer noted. "The gospel work is happening there. We are going to go into the setting to find our place there."

A rough timeline for the mission includes hiring and placement of the first mission workers by this spring, an initial team of two couples or families. An advisory council also will be created.



Bohrer noted that timing is an important consideration related to the peace process in Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Accord that ended the civil war includes a provision that in 2011 the South hold a referendum to determine if it will become an independent country or stay as part of one country with the North. This may affect the Brethren mission effort.

Sudan mission workers will help raise their own financial support. Bohrer called it a "new/old" model, offering congregations and others the opportunity to directly support a mission worker and family, while continuing to include the mission program and its staff in the structure and organization of the General Board.

Bohrer acknowledged that Brethren will be able to tackle only a small portion of the work needed in southern Sudan. But recalling Jesus' parable of the effects of yeast on bread, he added, "We're potentially going to have a strong impact on part of it."

He called on the church to make itself ready for the journey with Sudan, "no matter how long and how hard this journey becomes, because it has the potential to be more difficult. We're going to learn what it means to be faithful in a place of violence and uncertainty." For more about the Sudan mission work go to www.brethren.org/genbd/global_mission/Sudan/index.htm.

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$44,000 supports the work of the Church World Service Disaster Response and Recovery Liaison program
- \$25,000 continues support of the Brethren Disaster Response project in Lucedale, Miss.
- \$3,000 completes funding for Disaster Child Care and other volunteers in Florida after Hurricane Wilma
- \$1,500 completes funding for a Brethren Disaster Response project in Alabama following Hurricane Katrina

Trust may help preserve John Kline homestead

A John Kline Homestead Preservation Trust has been created in hopes of preserving the home of Elder John Kline, a leader of the Brethren during the Civil War.

The trust's steering committee held a first meeting Nov. 11 at nearby Linville Creek Church of the Brethren in Broadway, Va., to determine whether there is widespread interest among the Brethren to preserve the homestead.

The historic home became available for purchase in 2006. It was owned and occupied for seven generations by a Mennonite family, which has proposed to sell the property. Local Brethren leaders formed the trust to consider plans for preserving the remaining 10 acres of the original John Kline farm, according to Linville Creek pastor Paul Roth.

The home was built in 1822 as the first home of Elder John and Anna Wampler Kline. It also served as one of the three original meetinghouses of Linville Creek church. A temporary steering committee for the trust has included Roth, Robert E. Alley, John W. Flora, W. Wallace Hatcher, Rebecca Hunter, Stephen L. Longenecker, Phillip C. Stone Sr., and Dale V. Ulrich.

Disaster leadership training provides unique experience

October represented a new beginning for leadership in the Brethren Disaster Response program, as 26 people from 13 states participated in two disaster project leadership trainings in Pensacola, Fla., and Lucedale, Miss.

These were the first trainings of their kind to be offered by Brethren Disaster Response, featuring experience at actual disaster response project sites. Each two-week training was filled with instruction and skill development sessions, as presenters from local disaster recovery groups, Disaster Response staff, and current project leadership provided special training in their field of expertise.

The training focused on topics such as construction management, safety, volunteer management, meal planning, and



BVS/BRF unit holds orientation: *The annual Brethren Revival Fellowship unit of Brethren Volunteer Service has begun a year of service at the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Lewiston, Maine. Unit 271 completed orientation Aug. 30 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Front row, from left: Tonia Little, Blue Rock Independent Brethren Church, Mercersburg, Pa.; the Newcomer family of Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren, Spring Grove, Pa. (including baby Alex, Renae, Andy, and Abigail); back row, from left: Matt Fuhrman, Pleasant Hill, and Nathan Meyers, Upton Church of the Brethren, Greencastle, Pa.*

hospitality. In addition to staff, trainers included Bob and Marianne Pittman, Larry and Alice Petry, Brethren Volunteer Service workers Phil and Joan Taylor, and safety expert Steve Hollinger.

The volunteer project leaders will continue their training by working with the leaders of current disaster response projects to hone skills and become comfortable in leadership roles.

In other disaster response news, a new Hurricane Katrina clean-up and rebuilding project opened in Tammany Parish, La., on Oct. 15. Katrina caused devastation for the parish on the northern shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Brethren Disaster Response opened the project in Pearl River, a small town outside of Slidell.

Brethren, Mennonites deliver aid to Amish families

Brethren and Mennonites have been responding generously to the Amish community affected by the Oct. 2 shootings at the West Nickel Mines Amish School.

Mennonite Weekly Review reported that as of Oct. 17 more than \$1.4 million has been raised through three funds to benefit survivors and families of the victims. Mennonite Disaster

Service, Mennonite Central Committee, and the Anabaptist Foundation all established funds in the wake of the tragedy. Several public fund-raisers have been held.

Brethren Disaster Relief Auction Inc. and The United Relief Fund (TURF), which hold a major Church of the Brethren fund-raising event each September in Lebanon, Pa., announced that it had unanimously approved a grant application related to the tragedy, "providing substantial support for the rebuilding of lives affected by this disaster. This specifically includes the rebuilding of an Amish school, ongoing medical expenses, and the continuing care of all those affected." A check was delivered to the Amish community Oct. 18. The committee requested that the amount not be disclosed.

Auction committee chair Duane Ness said in a release that the auction's executive board and committee members had worked closely with many of the affected Amish families over the years.

A formal letter from Church of the Brethren General Board general secretary Stan Noffsinger, Annual Conference moderator Belita Mitchell, and Atlantic Northeast District executive minister Craig Smith was also sent to the bishops of the family members affected.

World War-era sourcebook sizzles

Readers know the special delight when you discover a real page-turner, a book you just can't bear to put down. I found just such a book recently. What surprised me was it turned out to be Stephen L. Longenecker's *The Brethren During the Age of World War*, the fifth in the series of Brethren sourcebooks.

Longenecker, who is a professor of history and chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Bridgewater (Va.) College, tells the story of the Brethren from 1900 to 1950. He not only uses copious quotations from vital sources from the period (hence the name "sourcebook"); he also ties these documents together as a clear and compelling narrative.



FRANK RAMIREZ

The Brethren movement from a nonconformist sect to a mainstream faith is tied to the economic and political history of the United States, including the Jazz Age, Prohibition, the Great Depression, and two World Wars.

The start of the 20th century found the Brethren still conflicted after their three-way split in the 1880s. The conflict ultimately led to a small breakup with the group known as the Dunkard Brethren, but ultimately the greater

number of dissenters remained despite their dissatisfaction with the direction the Brethren were going. The schism was the result of a conflict not between liberals and conservatives, but between conservatives and fundamentalists who may have shared similar views on doctrine, but not on practice.

This conflict led one church leader to note, "I believe in the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ, and doctrinally, I believe in all that fundamentalists teach so far as it relates to

One of the things I love about a book like this is that I learned so many new things. Who knew, for instance, that when the 1928 Annual Conference concluded with the hymn "O Happy Day," (#454 in the 1925 Hymnal) it was sung to the tune better known as "How Dry I Am"?

Then there's the long list of complaints by the Dunkard Brethren against the main body, including "Sisters wearing bloomers . . . (and) bobbing hair," "Ministers reading 'Mutt and Jeff,' " church members going to "picknicks" and "Churches holding chicken and waffle suppers to pay their drone pastors."

There are harrowing stories of heroism: Brethren missionaries who survived the sinking of their ship by German U-Boats, others enduring the horrors of the Japanese invasion and captivity, the unflinching heroism of Ralph and Mary Blocher Smeltzer as they advocated for Japanese-Americans slated for internment, and the indomitable inventiveness of Helena Kruger as she worked her own Brethren Service miracle by requisitioning, by hook or by crook, materials for hospitals and schools for German children in post-war Austria.

And one can see how the second major rift emerged, between those who favored evangelism and soul-winning versus those who believed that Christ becomes incarnate through service to the world.

Longenecker titles his final chapter "The Greatest Generation," but unlike Tom Brokaw's well-known book of the same name, he adds a question mark. Brokaw's much-lauded "Greatest Generation" accomplished great things but ". . . also harbored McCarthyism, abandoned the civil rights revolution to its children, and saddled them with Vietnam and a nuclear arms race."

Longenecker applies the same skepticism to the Brethren Greatest Generation. "Although the fundamentalist rebellion hardly began with them, it worsened on their watch and foreshadowed what in the late 20th century became a deeply divided fellowship. Also, after 1960, under this generation's leadership, denominational membership plummeted. Alexander Mack would not have been pleased."

Longenecker is a good writer, and I love good writing. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to know how we Brethren have come to the place we find ourselves today, as Christians who speak to each other across a great divide, both united and separated by our belief in Jesus as Lord. It takes its rightful place on a small shelf of Brethren histories between the other four sourcebooks, Carl Bowman's *Brethren Society*, and Donald F. Durnbaugh's *Fruit of the Vine*. **W**

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

The pacifist Brethren are at their best and worst when pounded in the crucible of war. The suffering that attends war also brings the opportunity for clarification of beliefs and service ministries.

doctrine. But they have developed an attitude of mind which I believe is entirely wrong. Unless you believe in their interpretation in everything, you are entirely wrong."

(Ultimately it is conservatives and progressives, many of whom are involved in the great Brethren Service explosion of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, who find themselves looking at each other across the divide. Then, as now, there was a desire on the part of many to remain together.)

Longenecker suggests, ironically, that the pacifist Brethren are at their best and worst when pounded in the crucible of war. The suffering that attends war also brings the opportunity for clarification of beliefs and service ministries.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Brethren During the Age of World War: The Church of the Brethren Encounter with Modernization, 1914-1950.*

Author: Stephen L. Longenecker. **Published by:** Brethren Press, 2006. Format: hardback, 342 pages.

Cost: \$25.95. **To order:** Call 800-441-3712 or visit www.brethrenpress.com.



ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

President Phillip C. Stone announced that Arthur C. Hessler, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the college, will retire on June 30. Hessler joined Bridgewater in 1998 as vice president and dean for academic affairs; in 2004, he was also named dean of the college. A national search to fill the position is under way.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Eight students—Odessa Armstrong, Erika Belletti, Tamara Burch, Sarah Levine, Megan Lippincott, Hilary Nelson, Tiphane Purnell, and Lisa Weeks—were selected this fall as the college's first Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania. Students who successfully complete 450 hours of service by September 2007 will receive an AmeriCorps Education award of \$1,250.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

The women's volleyball team won its second NCAA Division III national championship in two years in November, topping Washington University of Missouri 3-2 in November. The Eagles, who finished the year 38-2 in match play, overcame a two-games-to-one deficit to claim the victory. . . . Juniata's Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies celebrated its 20th anniversary by hosting a symposium on the topic "God, War, and Inevitability" on Nov. 11.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The dedication of the Frank and Nadine Johnson Family Plaza was the highlight of Homecoming Weekend 2006, held in mid-October. Frank Johnson, who died in 2002, was a former mayor of the city of La Verne; Nadine, a 1956 La Verne alumna, is now a member of the board of trustees. Nadine Johnson and her three sons attended the dedication.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Philosophical theologian Steven Crain, a member of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., will become campus pastor on July 1. Crain is seeking ordination in Northern Indiana District. He has been a philosophy faculty member at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

The 2006 class of the college's Athletic Hall of Fame was inducted during ceremonies Oct. 13. Members of the newest class of inductees were Betty Jo (Baker) Johns '53, Steve Burkholder '76, Art Ray, cross-country and track & field coach from 1966-1977, and Dwight McSpadden '54 (posthumous). The ceremony was held as part of homecoming weekend.

Youth ministers find renewal

Youth ministers and other youth workers from across the country were invited to come to Lake Buena Vista, Fla., in November to find some spiritual nourishment.

About 220 people accepted the invitation, made by the National Council of Churches' Ecumenical Youth Ministries Staff Team. Garland Pierce, NCC associate general secretary for education and leadership ministries, called it "a historic moment—the first-ever Youth Worker Summit." The group included an impressive total of 26 Church of the Brethren members.

The promise of refreshment was fulfilled from the start.

"The truth is many of us can lose our hearts in the midst of ministry, and forget what it is we're about," keynote speaker Mark Yaconelli told the group in the opening worship service, emphasizing the importance of rest and returning again and again to God's love. Receiving and sharing that love, he said, is "the real work."

Yaconelli, a respected speaker and author on the topic of youth and spirituality, addressed the group four times on the theme, "We Do Not Lose Heart." He focused on telling stories from his own journey as he covered topics including hav-

ing a sense of wonder, noticing the "tug" of God, being willing to be broken and to accept one's weaknesses, and seeing youth "with the eyes of Jesus."

"It's one heart at a time that we begin to change the lives of those around us," he said. "We have to think smaller, not bigger."

Minnesota musician Jay Beech and his band enhanced the four services with lively music, much of it original.

Pierce said the summit was the fruit of more than two years of planning by the Ecumenical Youth Ministries team. Representatives from 11 denominations were part of that group, including Church of the Brethren General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry director Chris Douglas.

"I can't tell you how excited I am to have all of you here," Douglas told the Brethren contingent at a denominational lunch, noting the importance of professional growth and support for those in youth ministry. Brethren participants came from California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Outside the worship times and denominational gatherings, the schedule included a variety of workshops, sessions led by staff of host Walt Disney World, regional meetings, and—appropriate to the theme—ample free time to enjoy some warm-weather reinvigoration.

Bits and pieces

- The first official Church of the Brethren **National Junior High Conference** is being planned for June 15-17 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. Leadership will include Tony Campolo, Mennonite drama duo Ted & Lee, and musician Ken Medema. The theme is "The Amazing Race: Continuing the Work of Jesus." Registration begins Feb. 1 at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/.

- **Regional youth conferences** scheduled next spring include Eastern Regional Youth Conference, March 9-11 at Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa.; Roundtable, March 16-18 at Bridgewater (Va.) College; the Plains-area conference April 20-22 at McPherson (Kan.) College; and the Midwest conference April 27-29 at Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind.



NCC Youth Worker Summit keynote speaker Mark Yaconelli, left, discusses ideas with Union Center Church of the Brethren (Nappanee, Ind.) youth minister Rex Holdeman.



Pontius' Puddle



Interculturalism brings blessings

I am the American Baptist representative whom the Church of the Brethren invited to work with your committee that is exploring how the Church of the Brethren can become more intercultural. The reason for my inclusion is that our denomination is the most ethnically diverse Protestant denomination. The church from which I retired has members from 23 nations. When we came together not because of a common ethnicity but because of our oneness in Christ, it helped bring us spiritual renewal—and in turn produced church growth and enriched my life and the life of our members.

Your committee members are wonderful, capable Christians. We have become friends, prayed together, pondered biblical reasons for the Church of the Brethren becoming more intercultural, and explored steps toward this goal. Also, we have explored how others are approaching this issue. God is working vigorously on renewal through interculturalism in several other denominations, such as the Presbyterians, Lutherans, Reformed, Methodists, and (possibly most dramatically, I think) the Mennonites. I rejoice that God is now leading the Brethren to join this same kind of renewal.

To the rest of us, the Church of the Brethren has long borne a valuable Christian witness for peace, integrity, and simplicity. Now, being on your committee, I also learned a little about some of your reverses and your hope for renewal. On your website, I've read about your "Together" emphasis that is addressing the question "What are God's yearnings for Church of the Brethren?" I join you in

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ESSAY CONTEST

The first decade of this new millennium has been declared by the World Council of Churches as the "Decade to Overcome Violence." The Historic Peace Churches—Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites—have been invited to think creatively and critically in communion with the international ecumenical community about seeking cultures of peace in a violent world. What story will a Peace Church tell the world?

The Peace Studies Program of Bethany Theological Seminary, in partnership with MESSENGER, announces the Jennie Calhoun Baker essay contest. Contestants will submit an essay or story-shaped manuscript addressing this question: "A narrative beyond creed and confession: What story will a Peace Church tell the world?" First prize; \$2,500. Second prize \$1,000. Winning essays will be published in MESSENGER.

The genre of the essay may be personal, philosophical, story-shaped, or composed in a style similar to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" radio series, *This I Believe*. Manuscripts should not exceed 2,000 words.

Manuscript submissions will be accepted from Jan. 1-June 1, 2007. Awards will be announced by Sept. 1, 2007. Send manuscripts to Scott Holland, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture, Bethany Theological Seminary, 615 National Road West, Richmond, IN 47374.

praying for your renewal.

What your committee on interculturalism is working toward has the potential to become a major component of this hoped-for renewal. May God bless you!

Glenn Hatfield
West Orange, N.J.

Youth conference history

How inspiring was the October MESSENGER issue that highlighted the July National Youth Conference! It helped to augment the challenging report given by our youth from the McPherson (Kan.) church who attended the conference. We all hope and pray that together we can continue the enthusiasm generated by our youth at that great meeting.

Your colorful reporting also stimulated me to dig into the history of what some of us believe to have been the FIRST Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference. My principal resource is a diary that I faithfully kept in my earlier life. In addition, I have the confirming word of Mark Ebersole, who was on the planning committee, and of Dorothea Fry Mason, who was in attendance.

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- MEXICO (March 2-11)
- PARAGUAY SERVICE TOUR (March 22 - April 5)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with GLENN EDWARD WITMER (April 9-22)
- RITTENHOUSE EUROPEAN TOUR (April 25 - May 9)
- KAUFFMAN FAMILY TOUR to EUROPE (May 25 - June 8)
- EXPLORING the WORLD of PAUL - TURKEY and GREECE (May 25 - June 10)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 11-23)
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 15-29)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 10-25)
- RUSSIA and UKRAINE (July 27 - August 10)
- LANDS of the BIBLE (September 26 - October 8)
- SCENIC RHINE RIVER CRUISE (Sept. 29 - Oct. 7)
- BEHIND THE VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (November 12-24 - with MEDA)

2008 TOURS

- AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 5-17)
- VIETNAM (January 18 - February 4)
- AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
- ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and WALES (June 25 - July 7)



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*"If you
step out in faith
and say, 'God, here I am.
Use me, God's going to do it
and is going to bless you.'"*

— Edie Hinkle, volunteer



Sharon Poff
volunteering at
the Brethren
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(completed application by June 10)

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Seeking elementary school principal for Winter 2007 and beyond. Chicago Mennonite Learning Center, a small, Christian urban school K-8. Commitment to the vision of providing quality Christian education with peace and conflict resolution emphasis in the ethnic and economic diversity of the city. Responsibilities include general administration, budget management, educational supervision, supervision of overall maintenance. Administrator supervises staff of 15, coordinates volunteer services and reports to board of directors. Desirable qualifications: teaching and administrative experience, master's degree in education or related field, and active membership in Mennonite or other peace church. Send letter of application and current resume' to Sueann VonGuten, CMLC Chairperson, 54078 Eastview Dr. Bristol, IN 46507 or vonalter2@verison.net, or call 574-848-7899 with questions.

Iowa Mennonite School is seeking nominations and applications for a new administrator. IMS is a high school with a vibrant atmosphere, stable and mature faculty, and excellent facilities. IMS is deeply committed to delivering a secondary education embedded in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition. Letters of application or nominations may be submitted to Atlee Yoder, Search Committee Chair, 1453 540th St. SW, Kalona, IA 52247, phone 319-656-5191, e-mail atleeyod@kctc.net. Applications will be accepted until position is filled.

Ireland Van Tour hosted by CoB couple. Both are licensed pastors as well as professional travel agents with 20 years experience. April 2007 departure caters to only 10 guests and includes airfare from any major gateway, van transportation throughout, all listed attractions, first-class lodging, daily devotional time, and full breakfast and dinner daily. Also ask about our September trip to Germany and Scandinavia featuring time in Schwarzenau!! Phone: 877-456-8769. Fax: 814-444-8800. www.smallgrouptours.com for details.

TRAVEL Cruise the Greek islands and walk in the steps of St. Paul, including Rome, Athens, and Ephesus, October 15-27, 2007; Enjoy the spectacular Rose Bowl Parade and begin the new year by visiting Hawaii, January 1-12, 2008. For information contact J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or kreiderk@etown.edu.

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

I am aware that the *Brethren Encyclopedia* lists 1954 as the first NYC, followed by another in 1958. The first one was held June 23, 1944, possibly beginning the evening before, and closed on June 26. The location was Chicago, on the Bethany Seminary campus on Van Buren Street. I recall a photo of the group taken on the front steps of Moore Hall. Dorothea and I agree on attendance of close to 100. Remember this was during World War II, when even Annual Conference was attended primarily by delegates.

Some of the leaders listed and recalled at that first NYC included Dan West, M.R. Zigler, Perry Huffaker, Desmond Bittinger, and Russell Bollinger. The talk by MESSENGER editor D.W. Bittinger, which I listed and have not forgotten, was entitled, "Saints in Caesar's Household." Dan West conducted a discussion on "Discipline for Leaders." Another quote from my diary for June 23: "First full day of Conference and already at some 'Peaks.' Hope we can keep it there." Although this first NYC was small, it appears that the enthusiasm may have compared with the larger one 62 years later.

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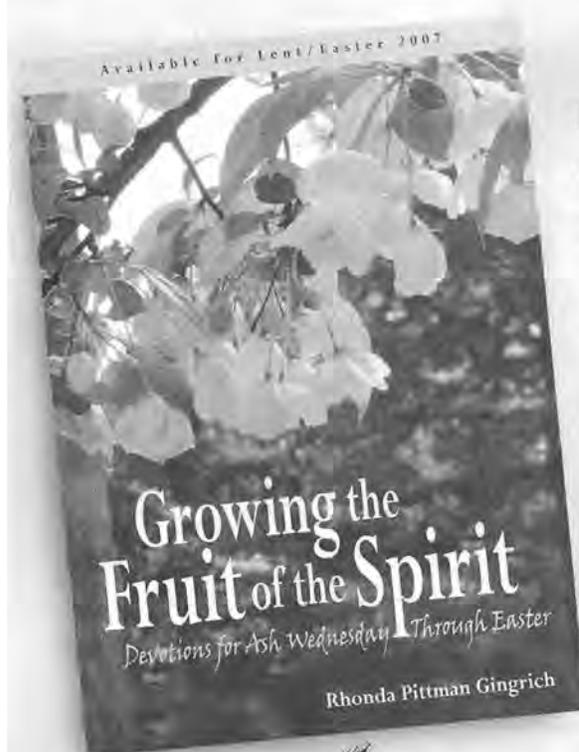
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The conference was planned by the BYPD (Brethren Young Peoples Department) Cabinet, which included Mark Ebersole, Benton Rhoades, Barbara Davis Enberg, Flora Harsh Weaver, and myself. We each represented a different region, and were selected by the regional youth cabinets.

On Monday, Raymond Peters, who was head of the Board of Christian Education,

introduced the new youth director, Don Snider. The conference concluded with a love feast at Chicago First Church of the Brethren led by pastor Harper Will. I described that final day as "Climactic day for the Conference and for me."

D. Eugene Lichty
McPherson, Kan.

Editor's note: General Board archivist Kenneth M. Shaffer Jr. researched the 1944 youth conference and determined that it appears to have been a "precursor" to the series of National Youth Conference events that began in 1954. It was not officially called "National Youth Conference," and it was open to "delegates from district youth cabinets," rather than open to all youth, as were the NYC gatherings from 1954 on.

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8059 ext. 206; jclements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Beaver Creek, Hagerstown, Md.: Brandon Stotler, Kasie Stotler, Hollee Winders, Kristen Resh
Bethany, Farmington, Del.: June Huey
Brothersvalley, Berlin, Pa.: Elwood Shaffer, Jean Shaffer
Brownsville, Md.: Grace Britner, Lorraine Link, Brandon Nokes
Clover Creek, Martinsburg, Pa.: Diane Curfman, Noah Krehl, Blake Steele; Brandon Weber, Craig Curfman, Mike Langer, Roland Malone, George Settle, Durban Metzler, Irene Calhoun Metzler, Shane Metzler, Vance Calhoun
Easton, Md.: John Banghart, Lyn Banghart, J. R. Stichberry
Eden Valley, Saint John, Kan.: Connie Edwards, Andra Bartlett

Heidelberg, Schaefferstown, Pa.: Melanie Patches, Isaiah Bucher
Henry Fork, Rocky Mount, Va.: Victoria Robertson, Katie Williams, Perry Brown, Judy Valdez, Simone Berry, Allison Brown, Alexander Brown, Kenneth Coleman, Rebecca Dillon, Shannon Hall, Tony Hall, II, Connie Jones, Tori Martin, Patricia Nichols, Chastity Scott, Sergia Soto, Hailey Thomas, Megan Underwood, Koryne Wright, Ashly Wyatt, Melissa Smith, Charlie Gibson, Tony Paz
Jones Chapel, Martinsville, Va.: J. B. Gilley, Hattie Mae Gilley, Ellie Flatt

Middlecreek, Rockwood, Pa.: Gabrielle Louise Noss, Kylee Mae Noss, Gabrielle Elizabeth Sleasman, John Elwood Sleasman, Rebecca Lynn Sleasman

Midway, Lebanon, Pa.: Brad Sando, Joann Sando, Melissa Gillette, Julie Knauss, Tyler Arnold, Mary Morrissey, Ruth Binkley, Sandra Schnoke, Janis Horst, Myrna Royer, Sharon Lehman, Jeff Lehman, Arlene Wampler

Mountain Grove, Fulks Fun, Va.: Ashley Custer, Megan Dove, James Fulk, Tracey Knupp, Breann Miller, Lisa Miller, Jordan Shiflet, Laura VanOrden, Elijah Barkley,

Brenda Cain, Kathy Custer, Frank Custer
Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.: Charles Miller
Pleasant Hill, Crimora, Va.: Debbie Carter, Carol Farmer, Maggie Baber
Pleasant View, Burkittsville, Md.: Vera Phelps
Pleasant View, Elida, Ohio: Jodie Orpurt, Kody Orpurt, Lakin Orpurt
Roanoke, First, Roanoke, Va.: William F. Hall
Sebring, Fla.: Patricia Tankersley
Springfield, Ill.: Jessie Gilmore, Ron Hartley, Evelyn Taylor, Mary Bushnell, Terry Link, Kim Link, Patty Brockmeyer, Terry Dobbs
West Charleston, Tipp City, Ohio: Rebecca Leis
Wilmington, Del.: Thomas Birzell, Dorothy Condiff, Donna Griffith
York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Crystal Waggy
Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio: Mary Smith, Al Vignon, Fran Young

Anniversaries

Bowman, Don and Katherine, Sebring, Fla., 50
Dubble, Wayne and Dorothy, Sebring, Fla., 65
Eberly, David and Ann, Gaithersburg, Md., 50
Fogelsanger, Jay and Doris, Hanover, Pa., 50
Gortner, Harland and Hazel, West Salem, Ohio, 65
Groff, Harry and Joan, Collegeville, Pa., 50
Hamilton, Dave and Velma, Virden, Ill., 78
Harrison, Ronald and Jane, Gettysburg, Pa., 50
Keese, Morris and Mary Jane, Martinsville, Va., 50
Kindell, Bob and Jean, Sebring, Fla., 55
Kline, Glenn and Ann, Mogadore, Ohio, 50
Nichols, Linford and Sarah, Hopewell, Va., 70
Ogburn, Earl and Hazel, Hopewell, Va., 60
Rhodes, Dean and Marjorie, Roaring Spring, Pa., 50
Roub, Allan and Margaret, Martinsburg, Pa., 50
Smith, Leroy and Mary K., Martinsburg, Pa., 55
Weber, Joseph and Linda, Savoy, Ill., 60
Wine, Marlin and Lois, Overland Park, Kan., 55
Wunderlich, Mervyn and Evelyn, Manheim, Pa., 65

Deaths

Bakken, Melvin, 91, Kingsley, Iowa, Oct. 16
Balsbaugh, Robert R., 85, Newmantown, Pa., Oct. 14
Barnes, Margaret Louise, 84, North Lima, Ohio, Sept. 30
Bernas, Richard, 70, Elgin, Ill., Aug. 28
Brallicer, Virgil, 91, Malden, Mass., Nov. 1
Brant, Woodrow B., 87, Clovis, N.M., Aug. 15
Brooks, Donald D., 75, Clinton, Mo., Oct. 12
Brown, Albert G., 86, Pottstown, Pa., Aug. 28
Brown, Woodrow, 88, Dunnsville, Va., Oct. 15
Bucher, Hazel Beahm, 97, Caldwell, Idaho, Nov. 1
Bush, Esther L., 89, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 9
Clites, Robert, 70, Berlin, Pa., July 23
Corbin, Lou Ann Potts, 92, Richmond, Va., Nov. 6, 2005
Dague, Alice H., 91, Washington, Kan., Oct. 5
Darr, Fred, 74, Somerset, Pa., Sept. 28
Doll, Lois A., 82, North Canton, Ohio, Jan. 6, 2006
Driver, Ralph J., 85, Lima, Ohio, Oct. 25
Evans, Walba, 84, New Carlisle, Ohio, Oct. 11
Fike, Norman J., 89, Easton, Md., Oct. 22
Frank, Eloise B., 85, Columbia City, Ind., Oct. 19
Frank, Helen, 94, New Oxford, Pa., Oct. 19
Garman, Dorothy, 93, Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 8
Goode, Carlton B., 80, Collinsville, Va., Sept. 27
Grubb, Kenneth, 85, Sebring, Fla., July 4
Hackman, Dorothy M., 89, Palmyra, Pa., Oct. 11
Harding, Helen J., 86, Hartville, Ohio, Aug. 1
Harnish, Earl, 88, Quarryville, Pa., Sept. 8
Haselbarth, Sally, 65, Berlin, Pa., Aug. 18
Heiks, Arlene, 78, Ashland, Ohio, March 20
Herrington, Verla M., 91, Pemberville, Ohio, Oct. 30
Hill, Sue H., 65, Salem, Va., Aug. 27
Hollinger, Anna, 89, Palmyra, Pa., Nov. 7
Hornish, Helen M., 89, Defiance, Ohio, May 13
Hylton, Maynard, 92, Floyd, Va., Nov. 12
Janney, William C., Sr., 78, Beckley, W.Va., Aug. 22

Jennings, Joseph R., 95, La Verne, Calif., Nov. 4
Johnston, Ruth, 87, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 20
Jones, Robert R., 87, Elgin, Ill., Aug. 20
Kashuba, Edna, 85, Knoxville, Tenn., Oct. 11
Kelley, Irene, 85, Easton, Md., Oct. 4
Kerschensteiner, Barbara Ann Hay, 68, Berlin, Pa., April 4
Kensinger, Wanda, 73, Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 1
Kiser, Joyce Mathias, 72, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 28
Koontz, Bessie, 99, Baker, W.Va., Oct. 7
Lavy, Perry R., 84, Uniontown, Ohio, Aug. 2
Lewis, William H., 75, Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 19, 2006
Madrick, Zeldia, 85, Gorham, Maine, Oct. 17
Malone, Patty, 65, Martinsburg, Pa., Sept. 13
Mangus, Louise, 59, Lakeville, Ind., Aug. 30
Martin, Dorothy, 86, Quarryville, Pa., Aug. 15
Maugans, Willis W., 95, Kokomo, Ind., Sept. 19
McConahy, John, 82, Roaring Spring, Pa., March 29
Miller, Duene F., 74, Dayton, Va., Oct. 4
Miller, John D., 82, York, Pa., Oct. 15
Mock, Margaret, 87, Imler, Pa., Oct. 8
Myers, Lois I., 74, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 24
Owens, Neva R., 72, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 26
Puffenberger, Ernest, 94, Moorefield, W.Va., Oct. 5
Reynolds, Fred H., 78, Madrid, Iowa, Oct. 12
Richardson, Jeanette H., 78, Roanoke, Va., Oct. 5
Saylor, Ralph, 49, Johnstown, Pa., Oct. 13
Schlossnagle, Ethel V., 88, Mountain Lake Park, Md., Oct. 22
Sellers, Martha M., 85, Hanover, Pa., Sept. 27
Shoemaker, Mildred, 89, Shippensburg, Pa., Sept. 11
Slonaker, Erma R., 92, South Bend, Ind., Aug. 2
Spessard, Edna, 96, McPherson, Kan., Oct. 28
Swartz, Garold, 91, McVeytown, Pa., Sept. 25
Taylor, Charlene, 71, Plymouth, Ind., July 21
Treece, Pearl, 88, Martinsburg, Pa., July 30
Wampler, Mark W., 93, La Salle, Colo., Sept. 29
Weaver, Louise Keim, 89,

Modesto, Calif., Oct. 31
Wilson, Donald R., 95, McPherson, Kan., Oct. 31
Witmer, Harry, 90, Oxford, Pa., June 6

Licensings

Brock, Sie, S. Ohio Dist. (Stonelick, Pleasant Plain, Ohio), Dec. 11, 2005
Crain, Steven, N. Ind. Dist. (Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.), May 28
Davis, Jacob S., Mich. Dist. (New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Oct. 22
Freel, Brent, N. Ind. Dist. (Osceola, Ind.), Oct. 8
Goodwin, Haley M., S. Pa. Dist. (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), Aug. 6
Grady, Brandon R., S. Pa. Dist. (Madison Avenue, York, Pa.), Aug. 20
Webb, Bob, Ill./Wis. Dist. (Neighborhood, Montgomery, Ill.), Sept. 10
Whittaker, Rebekah A., S. Ohio Dist. (Trotwood, Ohio), Sept. 24

Ordinations

Copenhaver, Kevin, S. Plains Dist. (Family Faith Fellowship, Enid, Okla.), Sept. 24
Dillehay, Julie, Idaho Dist. (Mountain View, Boise, Idaho), Aug. 20
Montes, Jorge, Ill./Wis. Dist. (Douglas Park, Chicago, Ill.), Aug. 19
Pugh, Edward J., S. Ohio Dist. (Lower Miami, Dayton, Ohio), Sept. 17
Snyder, John C., W. Plains Dist. (Holmesville, Neb.), April 30
Titzell, Linda, S. Pa. Dist. (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), Oct. 22

Placements

Brewer, Donald G., pastor, Kern River, Bakersfield, Calif., May 20
Chae, David L., pastor, Lord of Love, Victorville, Calif., Aug. 20
D'Oleo, Daniel, pastor, Maranatha Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 1
Meeks, Patricia L., pastor, Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio, Oct. 16
Rush, J. Scott, pastor, Brookside, Aurora, W.Va., Nov. 15
Titzell, Linda S., chaplain, The Brethren Home Community and associate pastor, Faith Community of the Brethren Home, New Oxford, Pa., March 27

Smells like church

Recently I learned of a landmark of sorts in far southern Illinois, near the Mississippi River. It's a white metal-and-concrete cross, standing some 40 feet high on a hilltop. It's not far from Carbondale, where Annual Conference met in 1984.

Called the "Cross of Peace," it was meant as a massive witness for Jesus Christ. Now, though, it's generating a different sort of publicity.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

An Associated Press article distributed nationwide describes a feud occurring among members of the 18-member board that administers the landmark. Newer members, it says, are accusing the long-time members of "taking the site for granted" and of misusing funds meant for upkeep of the non-profit site. The veteran members, meanwhile, accuse the others of wanting to "hijack" the site for their own purposes, according to the article.

"Amid the rancor," reporter Jim Suhr writes, "the cross is showing its age—many of its panels are rusting, missing, or simply attached by coat hangers and baling wire. Words inscribed on the cross' concrete base embody principles the infighting seems to have swept away: Faith. Hope. Charity. Peace."

What a witness.

Unfortunately, it seems like a metaphor for the church in an increasing number of places and situations. That includes Brethren. Our own brand of infighting seems rampant. Groups

Many still say that they are religious and profess a faith in God, but they have lost faith in religious institutions like the church.

They often don't see the beautiful words and beliefs described in scripture lived out in the formalized structures of religion.

on different sides of issues take potshots at each other. Some profess tolerance or a dedication to Jesus in one breath and attack their neighbors and fellow Christians in the next.

And we wonder why our membership is shrinking. We wonder why so many youth and young adults leave the church. How do we show them we're any better than the rest of the world? Why should they want to come in? Where is Jesus in all that? Where is grace?

Poll after poll and survey after survey comes to the conclusion that many people, especially younger generations, still say that they are religious and profess a faith in God, but they

have lost faith in religious institutions like the church. They often don't see the beautiful words and beliefs described in scripture lived out in the formalized structures of religion.

In one of her monthly updates last year, Manchester College president Jo Young Switzer shared a note that the school's athletic director had received from a soccer referee, complimenting the team's sportsmanship. The official said that win or lose, "I could always count on that Manchester spirit to come shining through."

"You never know who's watching," Switzer concluded. "It could be the referees."

People are watching the church, ours and others, and they're often not seeing us at our best. They see hypocrisy, greed, power struggles, and an all-too-ready impulse to tear one another down.

We wonder why it's so hard to call new people into leadership. But serving in a leadership position in the church these days is like going to a Brethren masquerade party dressed like an ice cream cone. Sooner or later—probably sooner—somebody is going to take a bite out of you.

Much good is occurring in the church, too, but as the smoke and scuffling from our literal and figurative brawls increase, that good may get harder and harder for those on the "outside" to see. And it may send some of those on the "inside" running out the doors, coughing, for a breath of fresh air. If people see more of Jesus outside the church than in it, we can't blame them for looking elsewhere.

During a visit to Walt Disney World's EPCOT Center this past year, I found myself in the department store of the Japan pavilion. I was standing near a display of incense when a group of teen-aged girls walked by. "Huh," one of them said, breathing in the incense. "Smells like church."

Unlike some Catholic or Orthodox churches, our congregations don't usually carry the aroma of incense. I wonder, though, what smell our church is giving off.

Where I grew up, a strong wind in one direction brought scents of donuts or chocolate. From the other direction, it carried the nasty odor of a paper mill. When the breeze blows through our churches, do people catch a whiff of new life or an unpleasant stench? Is the scent that of communities working together as best they can or the rancor of name-calling and conflict?

Whether we realize it or not, that witness stands out like a beacon on a hill.—Ed. *WJ*

COMING IN FEBRUARY: The state of Christian education, new life in California, professional growth for pastors, Bible study on Lamentations, "Middle Church," and more.



Being Family:

Reality & Renewal

CARING MINISTRIES ASSEMBLY 2007

Sept. 6-8 Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

**Be challenged ...
Study. Learn. Grow.**
**Be inspired ...
Worship. Sing. Celebrate.**
**Be empowered ...
Reflect. Dream. Serve.**
Be renewed!

A Conference for Deacons, Pastors, Chaplains, Christian Educators and Caregivers

Grounded in the God of creation who delights in his children, we are blessed with "a place in the family — invited into the company of others to begin real living through Jesus Christ."
(Paraphrase of The Message, Acts 26:18b)

Attend the Caring Ministries Assembly and explore ways of "being family." Discover how to help families — and our faith communities — grow in love, acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation, celebration and delight.

 Association of
Brethren Caregivers
Serving the Caring Ministries
of the Church of the Brethren

Caring Ministries Assembly Keynote Speakers

David H. Jensen sees children as "gifts" and offers a vision of parenting beyond duty and toward delight. Formerly assistant professor of religion and philosophy at Manchester College, Jensen is currently associate professor at Austin (Texas) Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He is author of *Graced Vulnerability: A Theology of Childhood*.



Don Kraybill and **Kathryn Eisenbise**, authors of *The Brethren in a Post Modern World*, will explore Brethren values, beliefs and practices that enable Brethren to meet the challenges faced by today's families. Kraybill is recognized nationally for his scholarship on Anabaptist groups. He has served as chair of the Sociology and Social Work Department at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and as director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Eisenbise is a Bethany Theological Seminary graduate and is pursuing a doctorate in theology from Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif.



Bible Study Leader **Curtis Dubble** will connect the challenges that modern families face with stories of families in biblical times. A retired pastor and leader of the denomination's Family Ministries program in 1992, Dubble wrote *Real Families from Patriarchs to Prime Time* for the People of the Covenant series.



Annual Conference Moderator **Belita Mitchell** will preach during the closing worship. Mitchell is pastor of the First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa.



Music throughout the Assembly will be led by internationally known **Jean** and **Jim Strathdee**, whose work expresses a wide range of musical moods; joyful, playful, prayerful and always heartfelt. They will perform a Friday night concert of music that brings a message of compassion, justice, healing and hope.



CEUs will be available for pastors.

Registration materials will be available in April.
(800) 323-8039 www.brethren-caregivers.org

Church of the Brethren Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.

MAKE PLANS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007



JUNE 30 THROUGH JULY 4, 2007 IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

ADVANCE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION for non-delegates is available starting in March, on-line at www.brethren.org/ac or by using the form included on the Information CD to be sent to every congregation in March. Conference pre-registration closes May 18, 2007. After that time you may register on-site with an additional fee. See the Information CD or the Annual Conference web page for fee schedule and other Conference information.

Program Booklet (available in May)

Please send the following:

- Copies at \$12.00 each of the 2007 Annual Conference Booklet (spiral binding)
- Copies at \$3.00 each of the 2007 Annual Conference Information CD-rom

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Amount remitted \$ _____

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

Information about Conference programs may be obtained by contacting your pastor or Annual Conference Office, P.O. Box 720, New Windsor, MD 21776-0720

Volunteer Helpers

I am volunteering my help with the Conference tasks I have marked below. (Please number them in order of preference.)

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

I plan to arrive at Conference on _____

My age is (circle one): 16-22 23-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tel. () _____ Congregation _____

email address _____