

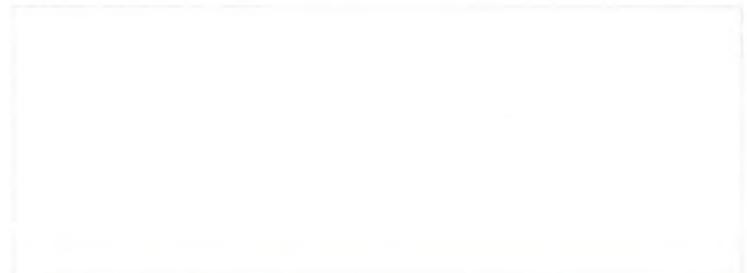
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# MESSENGER

MARCH 2007 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



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

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

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LIGHTEN UP!  
BRETHREN!



## ONTHECOVER

A “Lighten Up, Brethren!” campaign has spearheaded a call for us to pay more attention to the way we treat our bodies and our souls. How do we live more healthfully, not just in what we eat or how we exercise, but in all aspects of our lives?

### 8 Health and wellness: body, mind, and spirit.

This month’s cover package examines a topic receiving significant attention in the denomination over the past year or so. Stories include a discussion of ways that families can combat the “time bind” (p. 8); the challenge for pastors and church leaders to find balance in their lives (p. 12); a house call on parish nurse programs (p. 14); and an overview of Brethren wellness initiatives (p. 11), plus other useful resources.

### 16 Getting angry at God

It’s OK to be angry. “I think it is a mistake for Christians to suppose that faith is always a matter of being cheerful and upbeat,” writer Ken Gibble says. He finds a model for dealing with anger in healthy ways in the pages of the Psalms.

### 18 Ezekiel: Stressful times

This book amid the major prophets is a bizarre one, with spinning wheels, dry bones, and other odd allegories. How to explain it? Perhaps it’s a case of post-traumatic stress syndrome.

## DEPARTMENTS

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

**M**ore than 20 years ago, a regular MESSENGER reader suggested that I write an article about overweight Brethren at Annual Conference. No way, I replied. He could submit his own.

Frankly, that topic seemed riskier to me than most of the hot-button issues occupying the church's attention.

The "Lighten Up, Brethren" campaign sponsored by three of our church agencies has managed to tackle the tricky topic, however, by focusing on the wider (so to speak) matter of wellness, and to do it with humor. We've seen video clips, games, and T-shirts all aimed at gently encouraging exercise, weight loss, and overall health for body, mind, and soul.

Wellness is a popular topic in the retail world right after the holidays, of course. That's when you see ads for treadmills and health clubs. Advertisers know that many people are surveying the damage from holiday eating and making resolutions to correct the problem before winter coats are put away.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

For Christians, Lent is an especially appropriate time to focus on wellness. In the Church of the Brethren there has not been a tradition of giving something up for Lent, but there seems to be an increasing interest in taking on some sort of spiritual discipline, such as a more regular devotion time. And if something is given up, it might be fasting from television, for example, rather than from a particular food.

Perhaps the key is attentiveness. Whether one chooses to forgo a favorite food or to begin a new pattern of behavior, the aim is to be more attentive to God.

The real test for Brethren might come well after Lent. I'm waiting for the day when we give up the ice cream sundae bar at Annual Conference and discover another way to attract a crowd. In 1908 the Crystal Church of the Brethren in Michigan sent a dour query to Annual Conference asking how to proceed with members who frequent ice cream parlors on the Lord's Day, particularly when Annual Meeting "allows such trafficking . . . at and when Annual Meeting is in session." Apparently the query never went anywhere. And now, after 99 years of packing on the ice cream, it could be time to finally Lighten Up.

*Wendy McFadden*

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## Blossoming in the Blue Ridge Church plant's multicultural ministry is thriving

**Jesucristo, El Camino/HIS Way Fellowship**, a church plant in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Hendersonville, N.C., celebrated its second anniversary last fall with three days of worship and fellowship.

The Lord has blessed this Church of the Brethren fellowship during its brief existence. In 2004, there were five people involved; now the group regularly has more than 50 attending Sunday worship. More than a third of those attending are children or youth, answering one of the congregation's prayers.

A Wednesday evening prayer and study group averages 40 people each week. A women's group has been formed, and a "spiritual warfare" group meets for prayer on a consistent basis.

The real marvel is not simply numbers, though. It is the fact that there are 12 different Latin American countries represented, with a 13th having made an appearance or two. The common language of Spanish may be shared, but words are used differently, and cultures vary widely.

These people would not normally relate with each other, as more likely there would be racial tensions present. To see the people coming together as one in the Lord,

and loving each other as a family of God is part of the powerful transformation taking place in their lives and in the fellowship. Genuine caring is expressed to all, by all.

In one vivid example, a church member had not been seen in more than six months, having left the church in anger because she was called into account for actions deemed detrimental to the fellowship and offensive to other members. She returned in a spirit of remorse and forgiveness. That morning, the pastor called her fellow members—many of whom had been offended by her—to come forward and embrace her in a statement of forgiveness, and to welcome her home. The response to her was overwhelming, as the Lord's message to forgive your enemy was made real to all present.

This truly is a multicultural church seeking to be faithful to the words Jesus spoke, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."



*Raul Gonzalez, pastor of Jesucristo, El Camino, leads his church in energetic worship.*

**Northeast** Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania districts and Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren are among sponsors of a Renovaré conference on spiritual disciplines and renewal March 23-24 in Camp Hill, Pa. . . . Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren (Harrisburg, Pa.) recently had an adult elective class series featuring guest speakers from a variety of denominational ministries and interest groups.

**Southeast** The steering committee for the John Kline Homestead Preservation project held a meeting for pastors of congregations in Shenandoah and surrounding districts Jan. 11 in Bridgewater, Va. . . . Virginia District held its annual bowling tournament Jan. 20 in Vinton, Va. . . . Atlantic Southeast's Venture Fun(d) Day is planned for March 10 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla.

**Midwest** New Illinois/Wisconsin District executive Kevin Kessler will work from a "satellite" office in Canton, Ill., where he also pastors. The official district office will remain at York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard. . . . Black River Church of the Brethren (Ohio), which burned in a Christmas Eve fire, is doing well, according to Northern Ohio reports. The congregation is meeting in a nearby church's facility, and many neighbors have made donations.

**Ozarks/Plains** Northern Plains will take a bus trip to the far northern reaches of its territory May 3-6, visiting congregations in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana, with district board meetings along the way. . . . The General Board's Emergency Response/Service Ministries will offer Level I Disaster Child Care training workshops March 9-10 in Dallas Center, Iowa; March 23-24 in Natchitoches, La.; and April 20-21 in Littleton, Colo. . . . David Shumate is the speaker for this year's Western Plains men's retreat, March 16-17 in Great Bend, Kan.

**West** The Association of Brethren Caregivers is sponsoring a denominational deacon training event April 21 at Hillcrest Homes in La Verne, Calif. . . . Pacific Southwest's 2007 district conference theme will be "Alone Together with the Spirit." . . . New Community Project director David Radcliff is the speaker for the Oregon/Washington spring district youth retreat, March 16-18.

Carol Yeazell is a member of the Area 3 (Southeast) Congregational Life Team for the Church of the Brethren General Board.



**"I experienced God in learning that my body is a temple and not to be used in war. I found a commitment to peace, to speak to youth in schools and on the streets, spreading the word."**

—David Hyppolite, youth member of Brooklyn (N.Y.) Haitian Church of the Brethren, responding to a counter-recruitment event in San Antonio this past fall

### BY THE NUMBERS

# 480

Total registrations for Church of the Brethren General Board youth/young adult summer workcamps through Feb. 1. Workcamp registration remains open for most weeks at [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps).

Jeri S. Kornegay



Manchester College junior Amanda Patch from Otterbein, Ind., has been assisting with the biofuel project, including a demonstration at a student convocation this year.

### Out of the frying pan, into the lawn mower

What started curiously with a "What if?" is fueling student lab work, lessons in environmental science—and Manchester College lawn mowers.

What if Manchester (North Manchester, Ind.) converted that used vegetable frying oil from the campus' Chartwells dining service into biodiesel, wondered Jeff Osborne, assistant professor of chemistry. "The concept of taking a waste product, such as vegetable oil, and converting it into something useful is what I like," he noted.

Chartwells was happy to provide the cash and to part with its grease for education, and for stewardship of the environment and of the college's fuel resources.

Osborne found plans for an "Appleseed reactor" on the Internet. The name is for the spirit of the reactor: that people should spread the recycling word like

Johnny did his appleseed and make their own non-profit, biodiesel contraption.

The process is fairly simple: Osborne and a student researcher mix methanol and lye (sodium hydroxide) with the vegetable oil in an 80-gallon water heater for three hours, then pump the mixture into a separation tank. In the tank, the biodiesel rises to the top and glycerol—which forms during the reaction—sinks to the bottom with other by-products and is drained out. Then, the biodiesel is washed with water, turning it the color of honey and not smelling a bit like diesel.

Manchester is using its biodiesel in lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and some vehicles. The fuel requires no alterations to the equipment, said campus mechanic Cornelius "Corny" Troyer. An engine that runs on diesel will run on biodiesel, too, although he is quick to note there are cold-weather challenges and that Manchester is far from fueling all its vehicles with the concoction.—Jeri S. Kornegay

### San Diego re-commits to offering sanctuary

San Diego Church of the Brethren on Dec. 3 reaffirmed its position as a "sanctuary" church for anyone wishing to "consider their relationship to the military."

The congregation, located near a major US Navy base, provided sanctuary for seven men from the *USS Kitty Hawk* in the 1970s, current pastor Sara Haldeman-Scarr said. It has remained active in peacemaking efforts.

Impetus to take another look at the sanctuary statement came after the church agreed to host Kyle Snyder—currently AWOL from the US Army after serving in Iraq and becoming disillusioned with the conduct of the war there—for a Dec. 4 presentation to the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice. "The congregation wanted to be prepared to provide sanctuary if the MPs showed up to arrest Kyle," Haldeman-Scarr said.

About 30 people attended Snyder's presentation, according to a newspaper report.

"Today we need to recognize that there are men and women whose beliefs on conscientious objection become developed after they have already entered the military," the congregation's statement says, in part. "By offering sanctuary to these men and women we offer them moral support, time to seek legal, medical, and spiritual counsel; and the opportunity to openly state their belief about the military and war and their relation to it."

### Virginia congregation serves up 'roast' pastor

Evergreen Church of the Brethren (Stanardsville, Va.) surprised pastor David Brunk with a "roast" on Nov. 26, recognizing him for 30 years of service as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

After Brunk's initial shock of hosting a full house, he was able to deliver the morning message. His parents and many other family members attended (and helped keep the roast a total surprise), as did former district executive Merlin Shull and 17 members of Mount Pleasant Church of the Brethren, where Brunk had pastored previously.

The day included a covered dish meal and entertainment by six Evergreen members with a rendition of "Are You Sleeping, Brother Dave?" Master of ceremonies Jimmy Morris encouraged those present to share anecdotes and stories.

Brunk was presented with a plaque by Jake Harlow, chair of the ministerial board, for his years of service, and a PowerPoint presentation was created with pictures of Brunk and his family.—Shelviajean Allen



Stephanie Deal

Evergreen pastor David Brunk was surprised with a 'roast' in honor of his 30 years of service in ordained ministry.

• Happy birthday! **Clarence Mitchell**, a member of Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, turned 100 years old on Jan. 11.

• **Ruth Stokes** in October received the Pennsylvania "Everyday Hero Award." The 81-year-old member of Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was presented the award for her many accomplishments in community service. She still teaches water aerobics at the Indian Valley YMCA, according to the *Souderton Independent* newspaper.

• High school freshman **Caitlyn Leiter-Mason** organized a "Darfur Awareness Day" Dec. 10 at Glade Valley Church of the Brethren, Walkersville, Md. Visitors could receive information about the situation in Sudan and buy fair trade gifts from the area surrounding Sudan, marketed through A Greater Gift/SERRV. Phil Jones, director of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office of the Church of the Brethren General Board, spoke following a dinner, and more than \$2,500 in donations was collected for the work of Church World Service in Darfur.

• Church World Service recognized Newton (Kan.) Church of the Brethren member **Lee Rodgers** in January for 50 years of service counting CROP Hunger Walk money. Rodgers, a former banker, began as a CROP treasurer in 1956. He retired after the CROP Walk this past October.

• **Matt Guynn**, program coordinator of peace witness for On Earth Peace, took part in a panel interview on a national broadcast of "Weekend America" Jan. 13. The show, broadcast from Philadelphia, focused on the life of Martin Luther King Jr., with commentary on his speeches' relevance for today. Guynn served on the panel as part of his work with an activist-oriented network called Training for Change.

• **Daniel J. Whitacre** has now spent the past 50 years serving as pastor for the Salisbury and Maple Glen congregations in Western Pennsylvania District. The two churches are planning a celebration for this summer. Whitacre also was a public school teacher for 30 years.

• The *Kenyon (Ohio) Times* and *Findlay (Ohio) Courier* recently featured **Eagle Creek Church of the Brethren** (Forest, Ohio) for its work with the Foods Resource Bank Growing Projects, an effort that has been facilitated by the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund. The Eagle Creek project netted \$4,000 for agricultural programs abroad through the fund last year. "This is a great way to use resources we have in a way we never thought of before," Eagle Creek member Carol McMillen said in the Findlay article.

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# Multiculturalism will take courage

**O**ne of the most seemingly innocent but false statements perpetrated on the American public, and particularly church folk, is that "God doesn't see color." "Color does not matter to God; God loves us all."

I had to lovingly confront this in my senior high Sunday school class. I asked, "How do you think this makes a young man feel, born in the USA with black or brown skin, and only God knows what he's had to put up with?" I'd say, "Thanks a lot, God."



LARRY BRUMFIELD

The truth is God not only sees it, God made it. This is awesome. The same God who didn't fill the ocean with all blue fish, the same God who didn't fill the jungle with all white flowers is the same God that made many nations of different people. God not only sees color, he loves it. God loves the variety, the changes, the cultures. God loves it with deep emotion; God made it. It is an insult not only to people but to God to say he doesn't see color.

**Unless the Brethren are willing to make multiculturalism an absolute priority, I do not believe it will happen naturally in the church. I believe that culturally, traditionally, we have allowed ourselves to become so divided that it will take a tremendous effort to overcome.**

My brothers and sisters, when you and I accept statements like the "colorblind" statement, "psychologically" you're saying God is forgiving me for my color so that we automatically go into toleration mode as opposed to a celebration mode.

Unless the Brethren are willing to make multiculturalism an absolute priority, I do not believe it will happen naturally in the church. I believe that culturally, traditionally, we have allowed ourselves to become so divided that it will take a tremendous effort to overcome. We have to say, "This is our goal, and we are not going to be deterred until we get it done." When we realize that this is our mission, God will bless us for our diversification. God will bless us for our courage, and, moreover, God will bless us for recognizing the truth in his word and being obedient to the scriptures.

Our pastors have to be courageous—particularly those who pastor strong, prosperous congregations with much at stake. Multiculturalism must be approached with the same discipline, planning, determination, and courage as you would use to attack your building fund, or disaster relief, or any of the

major challenges on your leadership plate.

Let's face it, church. Let's tell it like it is, pastors. The culture of the church service is where the rubber meets the road. This is where the people and pastor are going to have to figure things out. I may believe in the mission, I may want the mission, but if you start messing with my culture and my politics ... look out. Most pastors don't want to deal with that!

Instead of facing the issue and dealing with it in an unprejudiced, biblical manner, the church has chosen historically—and even up to this present time—to adopt the "ostrich" syndrome. It has hidden its head in the sand. If there is any truth in any scripture in the Bible it is in 1 Peter 4:17: "Judgment must begin at the house of the Lord."

We have to get our act together before we can sell it on the street. We need to show the world that we truly believe what we preach instead of preaching one thing and living something else.

Pastors and other church leaders in our denomination will need to venture outside the comfort zones, asking what we are doing to put the issues that are clearly in the scriptures on the radar screens of our people. If our churches were facing a financial slump, we would not just go and pray that things

would improve; we would start aggressively teaching on tithing and giving and stewardship. The

bottom line is you teach on what you care about, and until we care about this subject enough to give it the priority it deserves, there really won't be a change in the church.

I heard a great man say once: "If the world is in darkness it is because the church does not have light." It should bother us that it bothers God that his children don't get along. This is not about blame. This is not about finger-pointing. This is about healing and restoration. The church's message must always be redemptive and not divisive.

I believe that God is going to provide the resources we need. We can always pass the buck to somebody else, but until we decide to stand up one by one and become catalysts for change, then how can you say that you love God whom you have not seen and you do not love your brother who you see every day. ❧

Larry Brumfield is a licensed minister and a member of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren. This reflection was part of a sermon he gave at the 2006 Church of the Brethren Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration.

QUOTE WORTHY

“Peacemaking begins with understanding the value of conflict.”

—former Mennonite Central Committee executive director Robb Davis, reflecting on his work in an interview with the *Lancaster (Pa.) New Era*

“In many parts of the world, the roots of Christianity haven’t gone down deep enough. We are learning, here, what it means for Christianity to be rooted in the soil rather than in a clay pot. You have broken the clay pot, and now the roots of Christianity are really deeply planted in the soil.”

—the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, speaking during a visit to Christian churches in China

“There was a time when denominational loyalty ran in the family. That is no longer the case.”

—Andrew C. Thompson, doctoral student at Duke Divinity School, writing in the *United Methodist Reporter*

“By all means, let us argue. But let us remember we are not enemies.... I have not always heeded this injunction myself, and I regret it very much.”

—Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., addressing graduates of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., last May. He was quoted by *The Washington Times*.

“I am troubled by the loss of identity among many who call themselves Anabaptist.... I grieve that we are increasingly unable to stand up for the Jesus of the New Testament who called us to another way.”

—Eastern Mennonite University president Loren Swartzendruber, writing in *Crossroads* magazine

“Serving as a pastor can be a lonely existence. It is important for the folks in the pew to encourage their pastor and his or her spouse and family to nurture healthy friendships both within and outside of the congregation. We are all nourished spiritually by vital, supportive relationships.”

—Christy Waltersdorff, pastor of York Center Church of the Brethren (Lombard, Ill.), writing in the Association of Brethren Caregivers “Caregiving” newsletter

CULTUREVIEW

• **Global membership in Mennonite-related congregations** (including Brethren in Christ) grew to nearly 1.5 million in 2006, according to a Mennonite World Conference census. About half a million of that total is in the US and Canada. The largest group is in Africa, with nearly 530,000. (*Mennonite Weekly Review*)

• An AP-Ipsos poll conducted in November found that about three-fourths of people in the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and the United Kingdom say they **experience stress on a daily basis**. Those anxious feelings are even more intense during the holidays.

• The Rev. Diane Ford Jones of Cleveland, Ohio, has been named the new national director of **Every Church A Peace Church** (ECAPC). She replaces John Stoner, co-founder and coordinator of

ECAPC for the past five years, who will continue with the organization in an advisory and support role. “Peace is within our grasp if we dare to seize this moment in history, trust God, and work toward it together,” Ford Jones said at her appointment.

• The National Council of Churches USA (NCC), American Friends Service Committee, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation are among groups that came out with **statements speaking against troop escalation in Iraq** following President George W. Bush’s speech in January. Church of the Brethren General Board general secretary Stan Noffsinger was quoted in the NCC release, noting opposition from the Church of the Brethren based on its peace stance.



JUST FOR FUN: WORD FIND

**THE FRUIT BOWL** This month’s cover package looks at issues of health and wellness. In the spirit of healthy eating, find these 12 fruits in the puzzle below. Answers can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and backwards:

banana	jackfruit	kumquat	peach	pineapple	starfruit						
blueberry	kiwi	orange	pear	strawberry	watermelon						
T	J	A	C	K	F	R	U	I	T	H	Q
E	O	C	H	I	U	R	C	E	H	O	N
O	F	R	T	W	H	E	L	B	S	R	O
E	R	E	A	I	T	P	H	T	Y	K	L
R	E	A	N	N	P	Q	A	R	U	A	E
N	H	T	N	A	G	R	R	M	N	O	M
U	B	C	E	D	F	E	U	R	R	R	R
A	Q	N	A	R	B	A	N	A	N	A	E
L	I	M	U	E	Q	C	O	E	W	N	T
P	N	I	U	F	P	E	R	P	E	V	A
N	T	L	C	K	U	M	Q	U	A	T	W
E	B	Y	R	R	E	B	W	A	R	T	S



by David H. Jensen

# Family practices in a hurried world

PLAYING, PRAYING, AND EATING TOGETHER  
CAN COUNTER THE 'TIME BIND'

**M**ost Americans these days seem hard-pressed for time. Regardless of income level, age, or whether we live in urban or rural environments, most of us wish the day contained just a few more hours so we could finish what needs to be done.

Technology has done little to ease this time bind. Instead of giving us more room to breathe, "work-saving" inventions such as computers, e-mail, voice mail, and telecommuting have gobbled up our time of rest. We are now "on call," it seems, 24/7. Add to this perception the everyday tasks necessary to sustain a family—shopping for groceries, cooking, cleaning, and diaper changing—and the day is simply too short.

Some of this experience of the time bind may be our own fault, as we often schedule ourselves to death. The mark of good parenting, in a hurried world, is sufficient organized activities for the kids; the mark of a valued life is one in which there is a lot going on. A full calendar (or, better yet, Palm Pilot) validates our identity: "I am busy, therefore I am." We hurry from one event to another, with scarcely time to breathe, all the while wishing we had more time to rest. Holidays only seem to fuel the fire, creating stress amid hyper-scheduled lives, busted budgets, and mounds of Christmas cards to be sent.

These frenzied patterns of ours have even contributed to physical exhaustion. We sleep, on average, at least two hours less per night

than our grandparents' generation. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild has observed that modern parents speak of sleep like starving people speak of food. One of the most tragic consequences of over-scheduling in a hurried world is that we slowly begin to see time and others who have a claim on our time as burdens.

Christian faith, by contrast, teaches us to value time as a gift. All that we are, all that we have, all that we might be in the time that we have is a gift from God, the one "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4). What are some ways that we as families and congregations can recover this gift of time and each other's presence? I would suggest three simple practices that are grounded in Christian faith and worship: play, prayer, and shared meals. Together, they offer seeds of hope for discovering the gift of time with one another in a frenzied world that clamors for more of our time.

#### Play as a gift

Christian faith, we rightly assume, is "serious business," as it concerns the ultimate direction of our lives: whether we are oriented to God in Jesus Christ or to something else. But the seriousness of Christian faith can also break forth in rollicking play. When we rest in God we are opened to the delight and wonder of each other.

In the 19th century, New England theologian Horace Bushnell recognized the playfulness of faith. A father of five who enjoyed

# **T**ECHNOLOGY HAS DONE LITTLE TO EASE THIS TIME BIND. INSTEAD OF GIVING US MORE ROOM TO BREATHE,

"WORK-SAVING" INVENTIONS SUCH AS COMPUTERS, E-MAIL, VOICE MAIL, AND TELECOMMUTING HAVE GOBBLED UP OUR TIME OF REST. WE ARE NOW "ON CALL," IT SEEMS, 24/7.



his children immensely, Bushnell claimed play as the foremost expression of Christian freedom. God implanted within us at the beginning of our lives a joy in play and attention to our playmates: a mood, Bushnell claimed, that foreshadowed eternal communion with God.

As children play, they invite us to play with them. Bushnell enjoyed daily tumbles with his children. These playtimes led him to advise parents to watch their children play and, from time to time, to "go into the frolic of their mood with them. They will enjoy no other play-time so much as that."

While we play, we relish the gift of one another. At play, time is transformed from a burden into gift, a gift that we carry forth with us even as we end our play. Parents who can no longer play may have lost sight of one of the fundamental themes of Christian faith—the God who delights in us and invites us to delight in one another.

When families play together, they recognize their need for each other and give thanks for each other's presence. Families that play together flourish together. To play, in this sense, is to thank God for the gift of others, delighting in them simply because they are. Is it no wonder that Zechariah's vision of the New Jerusalem is full of boys and girls laughing and playing in the streets and old men and women who sit in the streets, enjoying the sight of children at play (Zech. 8:4-5)? In this vision, time is no longer a burden, but a gift for which young and old give thanks.

Christian worship, like play, encourages us to give thanks for the gift of time. When lives become over-programmed, Christian worship re-programs us: The Christian year is not a calendar upon which we schedule more and more activities, but the time in which we delight in the God who gives God's very self to us in Jesus Christ.

The way we mark time as Christians is significant: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost all represent God's gift of God's self in time for us. God gives so that we may give; God loves so that we may love; God delights in us so that we might delight in God and one another. At worship, we remember, celebrate, and commemorate God's saving acts for us, acts that free us to love one another in Christ.

As we remember and celebrate, worship, too, can become playful: where we use our voices in song to respond to God's saving love; where we delight in the fellowship of one another

made possible because God has created us for relationship; where we rejoice in the reconciliation between people made possible because of God's grace.

Play is no stranger to Christian faith. It can, at times, be one of faith's most profound expressions as it reveals God's delight and our delight in one another. Families that worship together also play together.

## **Prayer in an inattentive age**

When lives become over-programmed, we lose the ability to pay attention. Perhaps the most vivid example of our society's inability to pay attention is the fast-paced music videos that now saturate the airwaves. In most of these snippets, no one image lingers more than a second; instead, hundreds of images ricochet across the TV screen in the span of a few minutes. Dancers gyrate, lights flash, and guitars scream as cars careen past us. Too much happens in too little time, leaving us overwhelmed rather than attentive. Similarly, when calendars get filled with more and more stuff, our ability to breathe in the detail of our lives disappears. And when we can no longer pay attention, we cease praying.

One of the ways that I have re-discovered attentiveness is by taking walks with my daughter, Grace. These walks to our neighborhood park (a mere three blocks away) began shortly after we moved to Austin five years ago.

Let me describe a typical journey: Grace has always taken her time with things. She is a child who simply cannot be rushed. As we walk the three blocks together, she always considers the same objects along the way: She stoops to pet our cat, lingers over a rose in the corner of our yard, bends down to touch a fence surrounding a neighbor's flower bed, sticks her nose into the crevice of a pecan tree, glances skyward whenever she hears a bird or airplane. Grace pays attention on our walks and invites me to do the same. Her attention often spills over into questions: "Why, Dad?" In the echoes of those questions and her observations, God's world unfolds for Grace, and it unfolds for me as well.

These walks would never fit into an over-programmed schedule. Sometimes the three blocks take an hour at my daughter's pace! They are, I suppose, to many strands of American culture, simply superfluous: Grace isn't participating in any organized educational activity. I'm not getting "anything done," and we could just as eas-

ily reach our goal of the park in five minutes. But these walks have taught me to pay attention—to delight once again in the everyday beauty of creation: cats, trees, roses, pebbles. In order to pay attention again, I have simply had to make time for it.

In one of her suggestive essays, Simone Weil writes, "Prayer consists of attention." These walks, I think, are but one example of how my daughter lives prayerfully. Each time that I walk with her, I find myself more drawn to the way she pays attention. And these walks, I think, have affected our prayers as a family. At meals, at bedtime, we have rediscovered that prayer is a way of paying attention. As we pray in thanks, we attend to the wonders of God's creation; as we pray in petition, we pay attention to those who hunger and mourn; as we pray in confession, we attend to the ways in which we do not walk in God's light.

**I**N OUR HURRIED WORLD, BASIC THINGS SUSTAIN FAMILIES: PLAY, PRAYER, AND SHARED MEALS. WHEN PRACTICED REGULARLY, THEY TRANSFORM OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD TIME AND OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER.



Families that pray together reorient themselves in the midst of frantic and hurried time, giving thanks for all God has given, voicing hope that God's peace will come to all. Prayers need not be elaborate and can be offered by anyone. All that prayer requires is that we pay attention to one another as we attend to God. Families that play together also pray together.

### Shared meals in a fast food nation

Our hurried age leaves little time for shared meals. In the midst of over-programmed schedules, the point of a meal is to gobble food between one activity and the next. Mealtimes get reduced to the physical nourishment (or in the worst case, the junk food) they provide. Dashboard dining—wolfing down a burger in a car—becomes more the rule than the exception, while meals around the family table appear as a quaint reminder of an old-fashioned age. The point of the meal in a fast food nation is to fill the belly.

For Christian faith, by contrast, meals have always been about more than food. One of the central acts of worship across the centuries—holy communion—reminds us of this. Communion is not simply about food, but about the coming of Christ as Host to our table and the hospitality that we share with one another because he is our Host. Just as Jesus, during his last hours with his disciples, shared a meal with them, we remember this meal and invite him as our Host whenever we break bread with one another.

Brethren remember this meal in a special way whenever love feast is celebrated: in the washing of feet, in the kiss of peace, in the sharing of a simple meal, in the time of reconciliation, Brethren remember that the sharing of food is always about more than food. This feast is also about sharing the gift of God's

peace and hospitality with one another, as it summons us as participants in God's reign of peace that we know will one day extend to the whole world.

The gestures of this meal, in other words, do not stop when love feast ends, but are carried forth in all meals that are shared. Families that pray and play together also dine together. Simple, basic acts of sharing food with one another, over a common table, where one can listen to other family members is yet another way of celebrating Christ as host. Love feast continues in our lives when we share food and hospitality with one another, listening to each other as we enjoy each other's company and stories.

In our hurried world, basic things sustain families: play, prayer, and shared meals. When practiced regularly, they transform our attitude toward time and our attitude toward one another. When

we take time to play, pray, and eat together, we are opened once again to the gift of each other in family and the gift of one another in the broader family of God. These practices represent at least part of what it means to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together. 

David H. Jensen is associate professor of constructive theology at Austin (Texas) Presbyterian Theological Seminary and lives in Austin. He was previously assistant professor of religion and philosophy at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind. He will be a keynote speaker at this year's Caring Ministries Assembly sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers.



Michael Hostetter and Lucile Vaughn confer during a session at the 2005 Caring Ministries Assembly.

# Lighten Up, Brethren!

Who should "Lighten Up"? What should "Lighten Up"? Why should we "Lighten Up"?

For many, it's not a question of "if" we should, but "how" we can as individuals, and how this could impact our health as congregations. The wellness concept promotes the benefits to be gained from the following disciplines:

- **Mindful eating:** lightening up our body mass
- **Conscious purchasing and use of resources:** lightening up our personal "footprint" on the earth
- **Practicing tolerance and kindness:** lightening up our negative thoughts and comments about others and ourselves
- **Exercising and caring for our body:** lightening up our steps and the need for medical intervention
- **Seeking new paths:** lightening up in our delight with God's world by continually learning and deepening our spirit life
- **Working for a just health care system:** lightening up the burden of the uninsured
- **Striving for whole person wellness:** enlightening ourselves to the connection between our spirit, mind, and body

Christ's ministry was to the whole person—not separating spiritual health from physical health. If we are to be faithful followers and give care and healing service to others, then the church's call is to promote self care and healthy lifestyles for our pastors, church workers, and members. The Church of the Brethren can be a unique leader in a holistic ministry that could touch the lives of all.

To learn more about available activities and program materials:

- Visit [www.brethren-caregivers.org](http://www.brethren-caregivers.org) and click on the "Lighten Up, Brethren" area.
- Sign up to be part of the e-mail **list server** and receive weekly words of encouragement and information on various aspects of wellness (see website above).
- Call the **Wellness Ministry office** at 847-742-5100.
- Ask for **pamphlets** or download them for both individuals and congregations.

• Order the **17-minute DVD** "God's Spirit Is Among Us: Wellness in Times of Crises," available at cost for \$7.50. To order, send an e-mail to [abc\\_brethren.org](mailto:abc_brethren.org) or call the number above.

- Talk with a **regional wellness contact** in some areas.
- Plan on using the **Health Promotion Sunday** materials available on the website.
- Check out resources available from the **wellness library** in Elgin, Ill.

• Look for "Lighten Up, Brethren" activities, including the "Passport to Wellness," at **Annual Conference** in Cleveland, Ohio. Activities were held at Annual Conference and National Older Adult Conference this past year.

The "Lighten Up, Brethren!" emphasis grew out of the Church of the Brethren Wellness Ministry, a joint effort of the Association of Brethren Caregivers, Brethren Benefit Trust, and the General Board. Please call or e-mail the office and let us know how you are working at "Lightening Up" the Brethren.—Mary Lou Garrison

Mary Lou Garrison is director of Wellness Ministry for the Association of Brethren Caregivers. She is a member of Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.



Two Brethren Conferencegoers receive their T-shirts for completing the "Passport to Wellness" at the 2006 Annual Conference.



Mary Dineen

## WHAT'S NEW WITH WELLNESS?

**Health Promotion Sunday** is observed in the Church of the Brethren each year on the third Sunday of May. This year that falls on May 20 with theme "Christ Exalted in the Body: Congregational and Personal Health." Worship materials and other resources are available at [www.brethren.org/abc/hps.html](http://www.brethren.org/abc/hps.html).

A Brethren Revival Fellowship **BRF Witness** pamphlet titled "**Overeating: A Weighty Subject**" was published in 2006. In the main article, Harold S. Martin writes, "We will never conquer gluttony until we stop making it a joke,

and start making it a moral issue—a matter of right and wrong. Self control is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), and mealtime is a good time to put the virtue of self-control into practice." For information on the pamphlet, call 717-626-5079.

This year's Church of the Brethren **Christian Citizenship Seminar** for senior high youth and advisors, to be held March 24-29 in New York and Washington, D.C., is focusing on health care and health concerns with the theme "The State of Our Health." It is sponsored by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office and the Brethren

Witness/Washington Office. Details are at [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/CCS.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/CCS.htm).

A biennial **Caring Ministries Assembly** sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers often addresses health and wellness issues in keynote sessions and/or workshops. The next assembly will be held Sept. 6-8 this year at Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren with the focus "Being Family: Reality & Renewal." See [www.brethren.org/abc/cma/cma\\_05/](http://www.brethren.org/abc/cma/cma_05/) for more information.

by Verne Greiner

# Meeting great expectations



## PASTORS, CHURCH LEADERS MUST STRIVE TO FIND BALANCE

**W**hat is the purpose of life? Is it to learn more about God? To know who I am? To gain in wisdom? To serve others? To advocate for truth and right?

Is it to sacrifice myself, taking care of everyone else? To learn to laugh at myself? To plan my life, to set goals personally and professionally?

What about Ecclesiastes 2:24: "There is nothing better for a man to do but to eat and drink and enjoy himself in return for his labors." Is that it?

**THE SURVEY SAYS:** A 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) survey found that the church's pastors and other professional leaders showed a high level of health risk factors that was "significantly above average," according to an ELCA report. Those factors included poor nutrition, being overweight, high blood pressure, and poor emotional health.

Whatever it is, it is also inherent in us to be human—as is all too often highlighted in news about clergy. Like it or not, pastors, church leaders, and other church professionals are held to a higher standard, and having as "bosses" many parishioners with their own expectations and needs can cause one to lose balance.

Setting limits on expectations is difficult. When your vocation requires you to work on the sabbath, when is your sabbath? When you are "on" when every-

one else is off, when do you rest? Meetings and illnesses and personal crises and deaths happen all the time. When a life's calling becomes a drudgery, it is a lonely time.

Good Brethren, including those who pastor or otherwise take a role of leadership in the church and community, are often much better at taking care of others than receiving care from others. We start out feeling unlimited—trying to be all things for all people—but move to understanding one's own physical and emotional limitations—*my cup is empty*. The need for balance and regeneration becomes as important as the work.

Personal expectations of being strong and in control to keep up appearances add to the internal distress. When I have gone over my line, many times it comes with anger or depression. When I start to feel like people are bothering me, instead of genuinely wanting to be of help to them, I know I need a timeout. The awesome responsibility can cause a warped sense of self-importance and duty. But the reality is that I am a *link* in the chain of many people's lives, not the chain.

Professionally, consistently putting self after God and neighbor tends to "wear a body out." It is easy to overextend oneself personally, for example, by sympathizing rather than empathizing. Saying no, and honoring that, is difficult when one sees so much that can and needs to be done.

Everybody thrives on affirmation, but it is not always the loudest voice that matters. Some people lack insight, or worse, common sense. The expectations of others are just that, and it is dif-



Church of the Brethren ministers have an opportunity for professional growth and networking with Ministers Association events each summer at Annual Conference.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

difficult to ever meet them. Clarifying those expectations up front is helpful, because it is hard to go back. Even with the best of intentions, not every situation can be forecast. It is up to the individual to have a sense of his or her own needs. In his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey observed that lasting happiness and success comes from within.

When one's own needs are not being met, trying to find comfort, good and bad, takes as many paths as there are personalities. For pastors, congregations can be supportive. Interacting with parishioners, however, cannot be the primary strength and source of rejuvenation, as there are no clear boundaries in that situation. Maintaining a professional separation facilitates setting and maintaining boundaries.

Developing balance between work and renewal

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**E START OUT FEELING UNLIMITED—TRYING TO BE ALL THINGS FOR ALL PEOPLE—BUT MOVE TO UNDERSTANDING ONE'S OWN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL LIMITATIONS—MY CUP IS EMPTY. THE NEED FOR BALANCE AND REGENERATION BECOMES AS IMPORTANT AS THE WORK.**

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is a dynamic process. How decisions are made at the minor, average, and important issues in life determines the course. Being mindful of oneself in the midst of all decision-making, balancing head and heart, is the key.

But some of us need to be forced into taking a break. That's why we like snow days; it's a dose of reality for most of us who feel we are "essential personnel." Being snowed in (instead of snowed under) gives us permission to stop and just be, to recognize that many of the expectations we feel day-to-day are self-imposed. The priorities under those conditions are more of being in the present.

The limitation of being snowed in is also freedom from doing, and just that realization is refreshing for a time. In mountain

climbing, it has been said that taking a rest in every step is a discipline that brings success in reaching the goal and, even more, can be lifesaving. Snow days are sabbaths, in a way. By intentionally doing without, the blessings of life come back into focus. That includes the blessing of a job. Getting away from routine is refreshing, and can be a recess from the urge to do.

Even rediscovering the art of a good walk can help pace the day, whether it is filled with musings or not. As St. Augustine said, "It can be worked out in walking." Whatever the form of recreation or play, it is the opposite of work, and that gives balance.

And at some point, everyone needs a place where they can take off their shoes and feel at home. Donald W. and Helen Rummel of Manheim, Pa., expressed it well in the *Brethren Benefit Trust Retiree News 2006*: "We have a deep appreciation for home: It

gives stability, even in travel; our souls are nourished here; our bodies find comfort here; and our spirits are renewed here."

Wherever we decide is home, it is a reference point. It is like the "all safe" spot in the game of tag.

Our friends are a kind of home, too. Having special people, such as a mentor or spiritual director, with whom we can drop all pretense and check out our reality, sanity, and direction is nourishing. Sometimes it is hard to see in a mirror what is seen through a trusted friend's eyes. ❧

Vernne Wetzel Greiner is a family practice physician in Mechanicsburg, Pa. Her husband, Jerry—who contributed to this article—has served several Church of the Brethren congregations as pastor and has been a camp administrator. They live in Mechanicsburg.

## SUSTAINING PASTORAL EXCELLENCE

Pastors are getting a boost in the drive for wellness through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) programs of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. The academy, a partnership of the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary, received a \$2 million Lilly Endowment Inc. grant to participate in this nationwide program. The intent, as the title suggests, is to encourage and support excellence among pastors.

SPE includes two long-term professional growth tracks for pastors who apply and are accepted into the program. Both are "designed to enrich their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, relational, and physical health," according to a release from the academy.

One, called the Vital Pastor program (ViP), involves small-group "cohorts" of pastors who design and follow a learning plan around their "critical question." Cohorts from the first two years of the pro-

gram gathered in Ellenton, Fla., last month for a retreat to share in-depth from their exploration of worship, Brethren vision, leadership, and mission.

The second track, Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership, brings together cohort groups of eight to 10 pastors for quarterly retreats to study pastoral leadership and pursue self-development.

Both tracks emphasize spiritual formation, supportive relationships, ongoing learning, and creativity.

by Tammy Kiser

## A prescription for wholeness



### PARISH NURSES CAN HELP CONGREGATIONS PROVIDE HOLISTIC HEALTH MINISTRY

**“W**hen Jesus sent out his disciples, he gave them a mandate to preach, teach, and heal. Over the centuries, the church has been doing very well with preaching. . . . The church has also been doing well with teaching—most congregations have active and vital Christian education programs. The church has never quite made up its mind, however, about where it wants to stand regarding Jesus’ commission to heal.” (Deborah L. Patterson, *The Essential Parish Nurse*)

In some circles, the term “faith community nursing” has come to be used rather than parish nursing. The American Nurses Association and Health Ministries Association have collaborated to publish *Faith Community Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*. Details are at <http://nursingworld.org/pressrel/2005/anp0725.htm>.

Early in church history, the role of healer and caregiver for the sick was carried out by the church. As technology advanced and illness became recognized as having a scientific cause, the church gave up this role. Perhaps this came about out of a fear that God would no longer be needed to heal.

More recently, the importance of the church in healing and health ministry is again being recognized. The mandate for the church to heal remains. How is the church going to fulfill its health ministry?

Parish nursing is one way to have a vital health ministry in a

faith community. It has been described by many practicing parish nurses as the most fulfilling area of nursing. The role of the parish nurse reclaims the historic root of health and healing.

This specialized area of nursing understands health as a process encompassing the spiritual, physical, psychological, and social dimensions of the person. It involves meeting people where they are. The parish nurse works in collaboration with the pastoral staff and members of the congregation to promote and enhance health and healing in the faith community.

The nurse assists individuals to become active partners in their individual quests for health, understanding that a sense of well-being can exist in the presence of disease, and healing can exist in the absence of a physical cure.

Recognizing that the spiritual dimension is central to parish nursing practice is a key element of a successful parish nurse ministry. Other essential elements include recognizing the importance of the nurse’s own personal spiritual formation and valuing all persons as sacred and deserving to be treated with respect and dignity.

In each congregation or faith community, the parish nursing ministry is as unique as the community itself. Parish nurses tailor their ministry to the needs of their specific congregation. As a result, the parish nurse ministry in one congregation might look very different from another congregation’s. Working with a “health cabinet” or health ministry team is very beneficial, as the cabinet serves as a source of support and direction for the nurse’s health ministry. In my congregation, the “Lafiya” committee serves as the health cabinet.

Parish nurses can be found in congregations of every denomination in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Their role is not primarily to deal with sickness, but more significantly, to be a(n):

- integrator of faith and health
- health advocate
- health educator
- personal health counselor
- referral agent and communication link for health resources
- facilitator of volunteers
- developer of support groups

Parish nurses may be found spending their days visiting homes or hospitals in the community to assure that members of the congregation and community receive the services they need, or they may organize health fairs, seminars, support groups, or retreats to educate the community about health issues and their connection to faith. Other possibilities include exercise classes for all ages and numerous other activities that serve to promote health in the congregation.

What parish nurses do not do is provide clinical, hands-on care like giving shots or drawing blood; instead, they focus on health promotion, health maintenance, and illness prevention. In my practice, these activities include blood pressure screenings, coordination of mammography screening, hospital/home visitation and consultation on issues as needed, health fairs, maintaining a medical supply lending closet, and coordinating classes on health topics of interest to the congregation. Developing a monthly article in the church newsletter is also part of my practice.

Whatever model of parish nursing a congregation embraces, the understanding that health is a dynamic process embodying spiritual, psychological, physical, and social dimensions is important. Spiritual health is central to a person's entire well-being. As God's people, we have a responsibility of stewardship for God's gift of life. Providing a health ministry that supports all aspects of whole-person health addresses this responsibility. ❧

Tammy Kiser is a registered nurse living in Dayton, Va. She is parish nurse for Briery Branch Church of the Brethren.

**T**HIS SPECIALIZED AREA OF NURSING UNDERSTANDS HEALTH AS A PROCESS ENCOMPASSING THE SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSON. IT INVOLVES MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE... TO PROMOTE AND ENHANCE HEALTH AND HEALING IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY.



## LEARN MORE

Parish nursing is a specialty area, and as such requires specialized education. The International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC) offers this education and has developed a curriculum that is also taught in many partnering institutions. It is available in a number of formats ranging from a two-week intensive program

to multiple weeknight or weekend programs, to online programs. A list of available programs can be found at the IPNRC website, <http://ipnrc.parishnurses.org/>.

The IPNRC estimates the number of parish nurses in the United States at about 7,000. The exact number is not available, as many nurses practicing as a parish nurse have not completed the for-

mal education program.

Tammy Kiser, the author of this article, will teach the IPNRC Basic Curriculum in an **online course, "Basics of Parish Nursing,"** offered by Eastern Mennonite University May 7 to June 18. Nurses who are members of an Anabaptist church will receive a tuition discount. For details, go to [www.emu.edu/nursing/parish/](http://www.emu.edu/nursing/parish/) or call 540-432-4186.



# Getting angry at God

by Ken Gible

## Psalmist provides a model of honest expression

**T**here are some things in the Bible that make me shudder. Case in point—Psalm 88.

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann has called the 88th psalm “an embarrassment to conventional faith.” He writes: “It is the cry of a believer . . . whose life has gone awry, who desperately seeks contact with [God], but who is unable to evoke a response. This is indeed ‘the dark night of the soul’ ” (*The Message of the Psalms*).

Here is just a portion of Psalm 88.

*“O LORD, God of my salvation,  
when, at night,  
I cry out in your presence,  
let my prayer come before you;  
incline your ear to my cry.  
I am counted among those who  
go down to the Pit;  
I am like those who  
have no help,*

*like those forsaken among the dead,  
like the slain that lie in the grave,  
like those whom you remember no more,  
for they are cut off from your hand.*

*You have put me in the depths of the Pit,  
in the regions dark and deep.  
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,  
and you overwhelm me with all your waves.  
You have caused my companions to shun me;  
you have made me a thing of horror to them.  
O LORD, why do you cast me off?  
Why do you hide your face from me?”*

The tone of the 88th psalm is unrelentingly dark and desperate. Even more, the psalmist accuses God of being the cause of it all: “You have put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep.” This an angry psalm, and the anger is directed

at God. There is not a single word of praise to be found here.

How did such an outpouring of despair and anger make it into the pages of holy scripture?

I’ll never forget how surprised I was when I first realized this kind of language was in the Bible. I was in high school and had decided to read through the Psalms. I’m not sure who or what prompted me to do that, but I am sure I could hardly believe what I was reading. I had no idea that the writers of scripture expressed such doubt, such anger—anger at God, no less! And I remember thinking, “What a relief!” How refreshing to discover such honesty. If it was okay for whoever wrote the psalms to express their doubts, their anger, to God, then surely it was okay for me to do the same. Reading the angry psalms was liberating for me at

that point in my faith pilgrimage. When I got angry at God or doubted God’s love or even God’s existence, it was all right. God could handle my doubts. God could handle my rage.

I still believe that. I think it is a mistake for Christians to suppose that faith is always a matter of being cheerful and upbeat. Where did we ever get this idea that God wants us to be happy all the time? Maybe we breathed it in from the messages in our culture, in a North America that has been described as “the officially optimistic society” (Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*).

What God desires from us is our entire selves, just as we are. We don’t have to come to God with the masks we so often wear for the benefit of others. “How are you doin’?” “Oh, fine.” And often, usually, we are fine. But sometimes we aren’t. Sometimes our lives are filled to the brim with worry or pain or anger or despair. God welcomes whatever feelings we have. The great commandment, Jesus said, is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” Not just with the good stuff in your heart, soul, and

mind; love God with everything you have. Love God with the best in you, and love God with the worst in you.

That's not easy to do. We have been conditioned to be good, to think good thoughts and to do good things, especially when we imagine God is watching or listening. The writer Madeleine L'Engle says that when she was a little girl, she used to end her prayers by praying "and God bless me and make me a good girl." Now, looking back, she says, "I become less and less sure that it was a good prayer." She has come to understand that goodness is what God can do in

us, not something we can accomplish by an act of will.

She writes: "If I am ever good, it is not because I am trying to be, but because

goodness is for a moment offered me as a gift of sheer grace" (in *A Stone for a Pillow*).

So how freeing it is to come to the prayer book of the Bible, the Psalms, and to find there both great joy and great despair. Some of the psalms express a desire for revenge on enemies. Psalm 109 contains a string of curses directed at those who, the psalmist says, "attack me without cause." "He loved to curse," is the accusation, therefore "let curses come on him!" "Let there be none to extend kindness to him, nor any to pity his fatherless children!" On and on goes this chilling set of curses. And again, we must ask, what is stuff like this doing in the Bible?

Again, the answer is: honesty. The psalmist is being ruthlessly honest to God about deeply held feelings of rage. Let's face it, you and I can get very angry about the way others have treated us. People we count on offend us or betray us. Sometimes we're afraid to acknowledge our anger, our rage, to God because such feelings aren't, well, "nice."

The psalmist suffers from no such misgivings. The longing to have the wrongdoer suffer is poured out to God with a vengeance. But notice this: The psalmist does not exact revenge. Instead, the feelings are given to God, because there is a deep trust that God will know what to do and will do what is just. What a healthy kind of faith this is! Sometimes just naming our anger and giving it to God may be the right therapy.

Often we think our prayers should contain the "right" words.

We wrap ourselves in a cloak of religious piety and goodness, when what we may be feeling is the very opposite. In fact, genuine praise of God comes from the very depths of our being, and in those depths there is always a measure of suffering, of pain.

When I read the prayers in the book of Psalms, I am greatly comforted in knowing that prayers from the heart are not just okay, they are gladly welcomed by the Holy Shepherd who longs to lead me by still waters.

God knows that situations sometimes arise in our lives for

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**THE PSALMIST IS BEING RUTHLESSLY HONEST TO GOD ABOUT DEEPLY HELD FEELINGS OF RAGE. LET'S FACE IT, YOU AND I CAN GET VERY ANGRY ABOUT THE WAY OTHERS HAVE TREATED US. PEOPLE WE COUNT ON OFFEND US OR BETRAY US. SOMETIMES WE'RE AFRAID TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ANGER, OUR RAGE, TO GOD BECAUSE SUCH FEELINGS AREN'T, WELL, "NICE."**

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which there are no clear answers. "Why am I feeling so depressed?" "Why did my loved one have to die?" Those are questions that, when expressed, you and I are tempted to answer with an explanation or a word of encouragement. But that is probably not the best response. Sometimes the best we can do is to point to a psalm like Psalm 88: "My soul is full of troubles."

And, of course, the reality of suffering is not the final word. In the words of another psalm, Psalm 30: "Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." When that morning comes and exactly what it will look like, you and I cannot say. At best, we have clues to it: clues like an empty tomb, like a risen Lord preparing a breakfast for his friends, like John's vision of "a new heaven and a new earth," of God wiping away every tear.

Even though that 88th psalm ends on a somber note, with the psalmist unable to give voice to praise, it is hard to miss what follows. Immediately after the 88th psalm is, of course the 89th. And these are the opening words of that psalm: "I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations."

That song can be our song, too, a song of God's steadfast love, a love that will not let us go, no matter how long and winding the road, no matter how dark the shadows in the valley, no matter . . . no matter what. ❧

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

## Ezekiel: *Stressful times*

**Bizarre book reflects a traumatic period of exile and loss**

by Stephen Breck Reid



The Whirlwind: Ezekiel's Vision of the Cherubim and Eyed Wheels by William Blake, 1803-05

**“Post traumatic stress syndrome.”** These words stuck out. I was having lunch with professor Nancy Bowen, who was fresh from her sabbatical to work on a commentary on the book of Ezekiel.

Her new way into the book was a different appraisal of the person Ezekiel. (The name Ezekiel means “God strengthens.”) The bizarre behavior described and the baroque vision reports lead some to label him the psychotic prophet. So Nancy’s observation did not seem out of context.

Why not? Post-traumatic stress often happens when people experience a war situation, such as a military siege. Then

couple this with a geographical relocation—what we might consider refugee status. The Babylonian policy of occupation included deportation of the most prominent people of the city. Ezekiel came from an established and prestigious priestly family, so of course he was destined for deportation—or biblical scholars call it exile—to Babylon.

Now remember that Jerusalem and the temple were the theological center of Hebrew faith at that time. The theology of those Hebrews considered Jerusalem as the sanctuary, the home of God. Could the Hebrews be a people outside Jerusalem? Was God’s power effective

outside Jerusalem? Could Jerusalem exist if God left?

The book of Ezekiel answers all these questions, and the person of Ezekiel lived through the traumatic stress that at the time did not seem very “post-.” The person Ezekiel and the book that bears his name provide an unparalleled synthesis of the earthly and heavenly in Israel’s religion and bear witness to the transition from pre-exilic to post-exilic religion.

The call of the prophet Ezekiel makes clear one source of the stress. The book begins with the longest call of any of the prophetic books (Ezek. 1-3)—compare Amos, for instance (Amos 7:10-17), and

**THE PROPHET, AS SUCH, BECOMES THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE HUMAN COMMUNITY—OR RATHER THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY—AND IS GIVEN A SPECIAL TITLE. THE HEBREW TERM BEN-ADAM, SOMETIMES TRANSLATED “SON OF MAN,” ...**

Isaiah (Isa. 6). This call/vision is referred to when one sings about the wheel in the middle of the wheel. God designates that the prophet will function as a sentinel. Any blood guilt that accrues to the people or to him will depend on how well he carries out this sentinel function.

The prophet, as such, becomes the representative for the human community—or rather the believing community—and is given a special title. The Hebrew term *ben-adam*, sometimes translated “son of man,” has for years confused the New Testament discussion of the Son of Man. The term in the book of Ezekiel refers to the role of the prophet as representative of the human community of faith.

Like the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel can be broken into material from the pre-587 BC destruction of Jerusalem period and the material after that. The early material consists of symbolic actions, visions, and allegories. Ezekiel lay on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days, signifying the period of siege and exile. He consumed food that was unclean (Ezek. 4-5). A key element of any renewal for a priestly prophet like Ezekiel would revolve around the temple (8-11); this includes the description of God leaving the temple (11:22-25).

Allegories, stories, and poems use usually inanimate objects such as vines and cedars (15:1-8 and 17:22-24), or some-

times animals such as eagles (17:1-21) to portray another person, group, or virtue. The longest of the allegories describes a nation of Judah as an unfaithful wife (16:1-63). Another allegory describes sisters Oholah and Oholibah who, like the unfaithful wife, once again recount the moral and theological failures of Israel and Judah (23:1-49).

The last allegory of Judah portrays the indiscriminate catastrophe on the horizon (24:1-14). Yet another allegory (31:1-18) addresses the moral and theological ills of Egypt.

The indiscriminate disaster falls upon the prophet Ezekiel himself. His wife succumbs to the devastation of the exile. The prophet is told not to mourn when he loses his wife, for the carnage is too vast to allow such sentimentalism (24:15-27).

The prophets were aware that God spoke to more than the interests of Judah and Israel. They consistently use the literary category of oracles against foreign nations (compare Isaiah 13-23 and Jeremiah 46-51). The theological and ethical commitments that Israel and Judah must adhere to are also applied to all people. The book of Ezekiel addresses seven nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt (25:1-32:32 and 35:1-15).

The message now changes to one of reversal, from the looted land to the blessed land, from the valley of bones to

a new community (36:1-37:14). The word came from “someone who had escaped from Jerusalem” that “the city has fallen” (33:21). The calamity described (33:1-33) has a political and faith community dimension as the prophet paints the picture of evil shepherds (34:1-31). The climax of the shift to prophecy of hope is found in the vision of that valley of dry bones (37:1-14).

The conclusion of the book of Ezekiel (40-48) looks ahead to the revived Israel. This spans the architecture of the temple (40-42). In the midst of the reconstituted community of faith, the glory of God returns (43:1-12). The temple, stipulations for the altar of burnt offering, and temple ordinances lay the groundwork for the distribution of land in the new Israel (45:1-9; 48:1-29).

This prophet suffering under post-traumatic stress syndrome nonetheless concludes with a blueprint that will give rise to the new Israel after the exile is ended, in 539 BC. Maybe Nancy does understand what is going on in this book and inside the head of the prophet Ezekiel. 

Stephen Breck Reid is academic dean and professor of Old Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

MESSENGER'S “Journey through the Word” series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in April: Daniel, by David Valeta.

## EZEKIEL: A CLOSER LOOK

**Author:** Ezekiel and disciples

**Date:** 593-571 BC

**Famous stories:** Ezekiel's vision of the chariot with the wheel within a wheel (chapters 1-3) and the valley of the dry bones (chapter 37)

**Notable quotes:** “The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. . . . This proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. . . . It is only the person who sins that shall die” (18:1-4); “Mortal, can these bones live?” (37:1-14).

## Outdoor Ministries Association hears from denominational leaders

Participants at the Outdoor Ministries Association conference enjoyed a variety of activities, including a hiking tour of the host camp, Camp Bethel. At right, Michaela Camps and Mike Neff enjoy the trails.



Matti Witscherek

About 40 camp enthusiasts and outdoor ministry staff met at Camp Bethel near Fincastle, Va., Nov. 17-19 for the Outdoor Ministries Association National Conference.

The event, held biennially to bring together those who work in or have a passion for outdoor ministry in the Church of the Brethren, focused on "Fostering Leadership." Bethany Theological Seminary president Eugene

Roop provided keynote leadership, while General Board staff Chris Douglas and Janis Pyle and former Annual Conference moderator Paul Grout led other sessions.

Roop spoke twice, providing an overview of generational differences in leadership during his first presentation, and holding together the "two worlds" of God-given creation on one hand and human ingenuity on the other in his second. Using the "cadence of creation" found in Genesis 1, Roop said camps could be places that teach people to live authentically in both worlds. "There's no place else in the church where that's the mission," he said. That principle of offering something that "adds value" to people's lives and meets their passion is key, Roop added.

Grout, now director of A Place Apart, an intentional community project in Vermont, identified the basic spiritual needs he has heard from every age group—being able to slow down, find meaningful work, not to be afraid, and to find a place of belonging. "In terms of our longing, we're all pretty much the same," Grout said. He encouraged camps to be "heart centers" for the denomination.

Veteran camp directors Rex Miller and Jerri Heiser Wenger closed out the formal sessions, leading a roundtable discussion on leadership development through outdoor ministry. Other camp staff shared concerns and ideas, especially looking at leadership needs for summer staff.

The weekend also included numerous worship and singing times, a tour of the camp, and time for fellowship and connecting. Camp directors and managers spent several days meeting in retreat at Brethren Woods near Keezletown, Va., prior to the conference.

### Association of Brethren Caregivers sets budget for next two years

The Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC) board approved budgets of \$570,360 for 2007 and \$617,320 for 2008 during a conference call on Dec. 12.

Board members expressed concern that overall giving has decreased each year since 2004, though feedback on programs remains positive. Eddie Edmonds, chair-elect of the board, commented that donations for 2006 may be down as much as \$60,000 from donations received in 2004.

Executive director Kathy Reid noted that the agency's expenses have been kept to a minimum, with the only increases occurring in medical insurance and rent.



Matti Witscherek

Outdoor Ministries Association conference participants had the chance to try their hand at some new ideas for camp games.

**Bethany Seminary board considers student profile, increases tuition**

The Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees dealt with numerous numbers at its semi-annual meeting, held Oct. 27-29 at the school's campus in Richmond, Ind.

The board's academic affairs committee reported that Bethany's full-time equivalency for the 2006-2007 fall session is 54.54, up from 46.81 in 2005-2006. New students include 10 Master of Divinity local students, 12 occasional students, and six Master of Divinity students in the "Connections" distance-learning program.

The board approved a recommendation to set tuition for 2007-2008 year at \$325 per credit hour, a \$29 increase. Staff noted that

Bethany's tuition continues to be below the average rate of comparable institutions. The board also authorized staff to develop a new financial aid program that supports the student profile.

In other business, the board approved the 2005-2006 audit; authorized exploration of a contractual relationship with Professional Staff Management, a professional employer organization that would manage insurance and human resource matters; approved updates to the by-laws;



and approved a recommendation to change the nomenclature of the Master of Arts in Theology degree to Master of Arts (M.A.), which more closely conforms to the standards of accrediting bodies.

At a dinner event, the board recognized the service of Dena Pence Frantz as professor of theology and director of the Master of Arts in Theology program. She began Jan. 1 as director of the Wabash (Ind.) Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. The board also welcomed new members Betty Ann Cherry of Huntingdon, Pa.; Jonathan Frye of McPherson, Kan.; Rex Miller of Milford, Ind.; and Rhonda Pittman Gingrich of Minneapolis, Minn.

**General secretary responds to Bush's Iraq war speech**



Jessica Fink

Stanley J. Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, gave a response to President George W. Bush's Jan. 10 speech about the Iraq war. The response was posted at the website of the National Council of Churches ([www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org)) along with responses from other Christian leaders.

"As Christians, we are called to continually give witness to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who called us to love our enemies," Noffsinger's statement said. "Last summer, in July 2006, the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference made a resolution about the war in Iraq that is even more applicable today. As the highest authority in the Church of the Brethren, the Annual Conference voted to affirm our denomination's historic and living witness that all war is sin.

"The message of Jesus 'to love your enemy,' from the Gospel of Matthew 5:44, is inconsistent with military action," the statement continued, in part. "Jesus' words instead move us toward peaceful methods, diplomacy, moral suasion, nonviolent sanctions, and international cooperation to address violence and aggression.

"Now, in response to the points the president is seeking, these statements by the Church of the Brethren are reaffirmed," Noffsinger concluded. "Furthermore, we reiterate the church's prayerful call upon the global community to formulate and actively implement a nonviolent, just plan that will bring peace and security to Iraq and all its people."

The full text of Noffsinger's statement is available at [www.brethren.org/genbd/newsline/2007/jan1207.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/newsline/2007/jan1207.htm). For the 2006 Annual Conference resolution, go to [www.brethren.org/ac/ac\\_statements/2006IraqWarResolution.pdf](http://www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/2006IraqWarResolution.pdf).

General secretary Stanley J. Noffsinger's response to President Bush's speech was based on a statement made by the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference last summer in Des Moines, Iowa, where Brethren also joined in a walk for peace in Iraq.

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

**March 10** Denominational Deacon Training Event, Bridgewater, Va.

**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.; Roundtable Youth Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) College

**March 23-25** Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees meeting

**March 24-29** Youth Christian Citizenship Seminar, New York/Washington, D.C.

**April 13-15** Youth Heritage Teams training event, Elgin, Ill.

**April 17-18** Vital Pastor orientation retreat

**April 19-21** Fellowship of Brethren Homes Forum, Hillcrest Homes, La Verne, Calif.

**April 19-22** Cross Cultural Consultation and Celebration, New Windsor, Md.

**April 20-22** Regional Youth Conference, McPherson (Kan.) College

**April 21-22** Brethren Benefit Trust board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

## Brethren Benefit Trust adopts new investment guidelines

For many years Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) has taken a corporate stand against four industry sectors that promote products contrary to Church of the Brethren statements and resolutions: defense, alcohol, tobacco, and gambling. At its fall 2006 meetings Nov. 16-18 in Bridgewater, Va., the BBT board of trustees adopted a fifth "social screen" for its investments: BBT will refrain from investing in firms that generate 10 percent or more of their revenues from the production or distribution of pornography.

The board decided the time also was right to expand its screen on gambling. For years BBT has screened out companies that generate 10 percent or more of their income from the operation of gambling machines. In November, the board decided to screen firms that meet that 10 percent threshold benchmark by manufacturing these devices.

BBT also began to assess a change to Brethren Pension Plan annuity rates, after an actuarial report showed that the plan's Retirement Benefits Fund dipped into underfunded status in 2006. That status is believed to have been corrected with the strong growth of investment markets in the second half of 2006.

An up-to-date funding status review study has been conducted by Hewitt and Associates, and the BBT Investment Committee is scheduled to meet to determine next steps. The board in November approved allowing the Investment Committee to change the "Plan A" account annuity rate, if the committee deems such an action to be appropriate following its

analysis of the funding status report.

In other business, the board ratified a 2007 expense budget of \$3,334,725 and a capital budget of \$66,550; transferred custodial services of \$400 million in assets that BBT manages to Union Bank of California, from LaSalle Bank; adopted resolutions allowing retired ministers or ministers who receive a disability benefit and who own or rent their own homes to designate 100 percent of their retirement annuity as housing allowance beginning in 2007; awarded payments totaling \$123,567 for the Supplemental Income for Equitable Annuitant program; approved two new fund options for Brethren Foundation clients; and voted to provide funds to the Church of the Brethren Credit Union to engage an independent consultant who will assist in writing internal control policies and marketing new products in 2007, possibly including online banking, checking accounts, debit cards, and home equity loans.

Fifteen guests representing seven congregations and Bridgewater College joined the board at a luncheon sponsored by the Brethren Foundation. Steve Mason, the new director of the foundation, highlighted the foundation's milestone of crossing the \$125 million mark of asset management.

Karen Orpurt Crim joined the board for her first meeting, replacing Mason, who resigned in October to join the BBT staff. The board approved Janice Bratton to serve another four-year term as a board member, and re-elected her as secretary. Donna Forbes Steiner was approved as chair of the Nominating Committee. Gail Habecker was re-elected chair of the Investment Committee.

## Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$40,000 to Church World Service (CWS) to address humanitarian need in several regions of the Middle East resulting from war and violent conflict
  - \$30,000 to support a Brethren Disaster Response project in McComb, Miss., repairing and rebuilding homes destroyed or damaged by Hurricane Katrina
  - \$25,000 for continued funding of Brethren Disaster Response work in Pearl River, La., following Hurricane Katrina
  - \$15,000 to CWS to assist displaced Sudanese people who are returning to their homes in southern Sudan
  - \$5,000 for a new year-long project for Disaster Child Care in New Orleans, providing child care assistance at a FEMA "Welcome Home Center"
  - \$5,000 to CWS following flooding and storm damage this fall in many states including Washington, New York, Texas, New Mexico, North Carolina, Alabama, and Hawaii

## PERSONNEL MOVES

• **Carol Bowman** began as full-time coordinator of stewardship formation and education for the Funding Team of the Church of the Brethren General Board Jan. 1. She began working with the General Board in 1998 as a half-time member of the Congregational Life Team in Area 5. Later that year, she assumed an additional half-time position as a financial resource counselor. More recently, she has been directing additional time to the work of stewardship formation in congregations.

• **Steven Crain** will serve as campus pastor at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., beginning July 1; associate campus chaplain Sonia Smith is serving as interim campus pastor until that date. Crain will join the Manchester staff after completing his work as philosophy

faculty member at the University of Saint Francis. He also has taught at the University of Notre Dame, Valparaiso University, and Washington University. He is a member of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind.

• **Wendi Hutchinson**, director of church relations at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., resigned Jan. 12 to begin work as director of alumni relations and special events for the College of Consumer and Family Services at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. The Manchester campus pastor and president Jo Young Switzer now will share leadership for church relations; admissions secretary Sandy Bendsen will provide administrative support.

• **Lynda Lubbs-DeVore** has been named "apostle" for the New Church

Development Board in Illinois and Wisconsin District, as of Dec. 1, 2006. The position is responsible for leadership of new church planting efforts and the education and calling out of new church planters. Lubbs-DeVore is co-pastor of Christ Connections Community Church of the Brethren Fellowship in Montgomery, Ill., along with her husband Tom DeVore.

• **Amy Waldron** began work with the Church of the Brethren General Board on Dec. 18, joining the Global Mission Partnerships team in Nigeria through Brethren Volunteer Service. She will teach at the Comprehensive Secondary School of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). She is from Lima, Ohio, and previously worked at Quest Academy.

## Brethren invest \$500,000 for 'turning hunger around'

A half-million dollars to counter world hunger was raised in 2006 by the Global Food Crisis Fund and the growing projects it spawned through the Foods Resource Bank. The fund is a ministry of the Church of the Brethren General Board.

The effort was marked by several firsts, Global Food Crisis Fund manager Howard Royer reported. Those included the "REGNUH . . . Turning Hunger Around" campaign of senior high youth and senior adults, and a doubling of the number and acreage of local growing projects for the Foods Resource Bank.

Giving to the fund topped \$318,000 in 2006. Of this amount, approximately \$100,000 came from the REGNUH campaign of National Youth Conference. The fund was further supported through "My 2 Cents Worth" offerings of congregations, churchwide art and hunger auctions, vacation Bible school and camping projects, and individual donor gifts.

Fourteen Brethren growing projects, some engaging partner churches of other denominations, raised more than \$200,000 for investing in Foods Resource Bank agricultural programs in poor countries, in a preliminary accounting. First-time growing projects were launched by Brethren in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Minnesota, and—gearing up for the 2007 winter wheat harvest—Kansas. Other sponsors in 2006 were the first Brethren camp to take part, Camp Mack in Indiana, and the first Brethren

Chris Dietrick



About \$100,000 of the money raised to combat hunger through the Global Food Crisis Fund in 2006 came from the "REGNUH--Turning Hunger Around" campaign at National Youth Conference, where thousands of Brethren youth participated in a walk/run to raise money for hunger.

retirement community to participate, Brethren Village in Lancaster, Pa.

"Brethren have a passion for reaching out to the world's poor and vulnerable," Royer said. "A significant initiative of the denomination last summer was the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by Annual Conference. But more significant still is that the Church of the Brethren did not just sign on to the goals to reduce

poverty and hunger; its response reveals Brethren sense deeply the call of Christ to feed the hungry and to work toward a healthier and more just world."

Both the Global Food Crisis Fund and the Foods Resource Bank issue grants that enable partner agencies in underdeveloped countries to launch sustainable, community-based agriculture. The grants currently support work in two dozen countries.



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.

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**ONCAMPUS**

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

Kari Byron and Grant Imahara, correspondents for Discovery Channel's "MythBusters," spoke at a Feb. 3 lecture. ...The Bridgewater women's basketball team was ranked 24th nationally in Division III as of mid-January.

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

Elizabethtown became the first NCAA Division III women's basketball program ever to amass 900 all-time victories with a 76-56 Jan. 6 win over Trinity College (Conn.). The win made the Blue Jays only the third NCAA women's basketball program in any division to reach the 900-win mark. The other two are Division I members Tennessee and Louisiana Tech. Of the 900 wins, 623 have come under current head coach Yvonne Kauffman.

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

The National Survey of Student Engagement results indicated well over 80 percent of Juniata seniors had experienced an internship, practicum, field experience, or clinical assignment as part of their college career. Less than 70 percent of college seniors across the country who participated in the survey had a similar experience. . . . Bill Alexander, vice president for finance and operations, retired Jan. 31 after serving the college in a variety of capacities for four decades.

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

Alden Reimonenq has been selected as the university's new provost and vice president of academic affairs. He comes from California State University, East Bay, where he most recently served five years as dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences.

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

More than 11 percent of Manchester's students traveled abroad or studied special programs in New York City or Washington, D.C., during this year's January Session. International destinations included Great Britain, Italy, Ghana, Mexico, Spain, New Zealand, and France. Another 45 short-term classes and practicums met on campus during the session.

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

Two seniors were recently honored as recipients of the Kansas Department of Education "Teacher of Promise" award. Abby Suiter, St. John, Kan., and Christa Blose, Stillwater, Okla., were selected by the teacher education department faculty for the distinction. Both attended the 2006 Kansas Teacher of the Year award banquet, held in November in Wichita.

**Bits and pieces**

• **National Senior High Youth Sunday** is scheduled for observance on May 6, with the theme "Now, Follow Me." Resources are available online at [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/YouthSundayS.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/YouthSundayS.htm).

• **Young Adult Conference** will be held May 26-28 at Camp Harmony in Hooversville, Pa. with the theme "But Be Doers of the Word and Not Merely Hearers." Cost is \$80 for registrations before May 1. Paul Grout, director of the A Place Apart project in Putney, Vt., will lead sessions. More details are at [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/yac.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/yac.htm).

**Middle Pa. youth 'Come and See!'**

How do you follow up on National Youth Conference (NYC)? In Middle Pennsylvania District, 128 youth from eleven Church of the Brethren congregations as well as from other churches answered the call to "Come and See!" and took part in an overnighter at Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren Oct. 28-29.

The event, organized by youth advisors from the Everett congregation, built upon both the theme and the relationships developed at NYC, held last summer in Fort Collins, Colo. The program highlighted Seth Hendricks, a musician and composer who currently attends Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., and who wrote the theme song for NYC. Hendricks did two concerts and led music for worship Sunday morning.

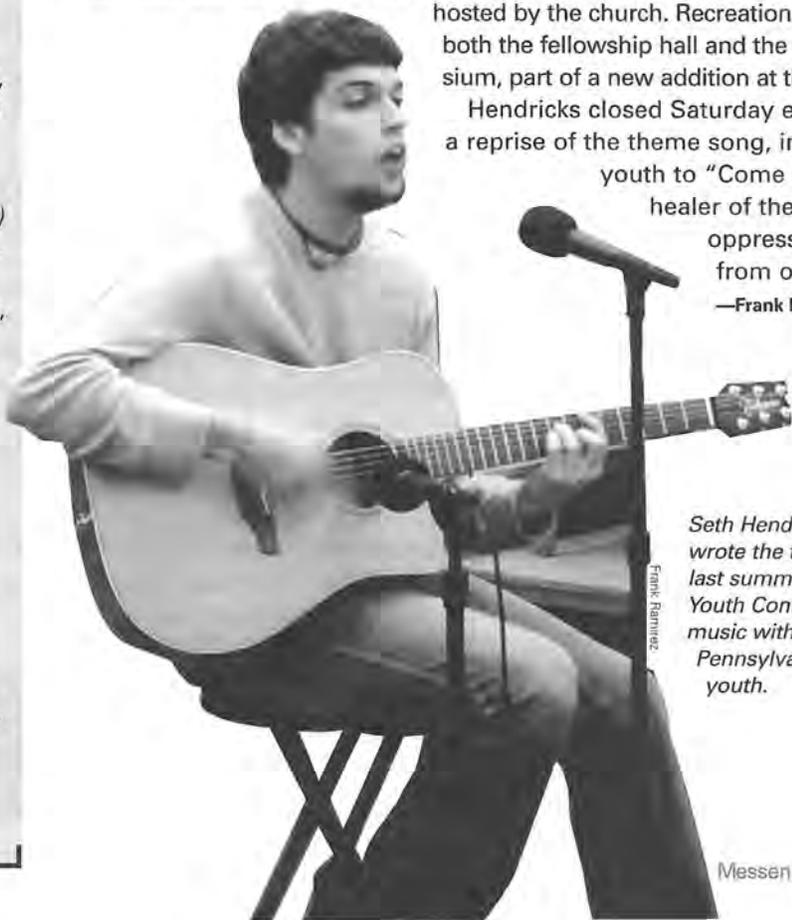
Many youth stayed for Sunday morning. In addition to music leadership from Hendricks, Everett youth Kevin Claycomb served as worship leader. He was joined by soloists Alyssa Harclerode and Jessica Hann and reader Kasey Leidy.

Earlier in the weekend, Ann Detwiler, a student at American University in Washington, D.C., invited youth to come and see for themselves when it comes to conflict in areas around the world, especially in the Middle East. Detwiler, who was raised Jewish, spent a year as an exchange student in Israel. She challenged people to look beyond the stereotypes that are often accepted about others. And Carolyn Gong of State College, Pa., who recently concluded a term with Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS), spoke about the many opportunities for service in BVS.

The event also included a spaghetti supper and breakfast and a potluck lunch hosted by the church. Recreation took place in both the fellowship hall and the new gymnasium, part of a new addition at the church.

Hendricks closed Saturday evening with a reprise of the theme song, inviting youth to "Come and see the healer of the sick and oppressed, free us from our fears."

—Frank Ramirez



Frank Ramirez

*Seth Hendricks, who wrote the theme song for last summer's National Youth Conference, shares music with Middle Pennsylvania District youth.*

# Book offers lesson in interpreting scripture

**I**t happened again. I picked up my worn copy of *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer, read a couple paragraphs, and got hooked once more. This awe-inspiring book about the fatal 1996 expeditions to Everest reads like a Greek tragedy, with hubris—overweening pride—the real culprit underlying a web of very bad decisions. Krakauer is more than just a great writer when it comes to vivid descriptions of places most of us will never go to; he also sees the big picture, and doesn't spare himself.

It's because I loved that book that I immediately picked up *Under the Banner of Heaven* a few years ago and found it just

as readable and compelling—and far more important. It was published a few years ago, so you can probably get a cheap copy on the Amazon or Barnes and Noble websites, but it is more current than ever with the recent arrest and trial of a celebrated polygamist. *Under the Banner of Heaven* recounts the story of the brutal murder of a mother and her infant child by Mormon fundamentalists. Ron and Dan Lafferty murdered the family of their brother Allen in 1984, claiming



FRANK RAMIREZ

they were following orders from God.

What makes it all the more horrific is that after one of the murderers had determined that his scriptures demanded he commit the murder, he tested his interpretation with his

**... in the end God's Spirit does not lead us to use authority and power over others for our own benefit and pleasure to the degradation and humiliation of others.**

prayer partners and found they all agreed with him. Their shared interpretation of a written text they considered sacred provided both inspiration and motivation for a shocking crime, a point of view the perpetrators continued to share even after their conviction and imprisonment.

Krakauer's gift for vivid re-creation brings to life the sere landscape of that arid region north of the Grand Canyon and south of the Utah border. He paints a graphic picture of the austere and cruel practices of the polygamists, who grant a divine sanction to statutory rape while defrauding the welfare system for millions of dollars. His colorful retelling of Mormon history and its fundamentalist offshoots is well documented enough to have earned the ire of official church authorities.

The central question that Krakauer asks is: If these believers tested what they believed to be a spiritual leading and came

to the conclusion that a murder was not only justified but demanded by God, what is to stop the believers of any faith from committing further atrocities in the name of God? How can we tell one spirit from another? After all, these were individuals who not only knew their scriptures well, but trusted them and believed that what they considered the Word of God should directly guide believers in daily life.

The question is especially important, in my opinion, for Brethren. We believe the Word of God should directly guide us in our daily lives. That's why we observe believer's baptism with trine immersion, share the love feast, anoint for healing, and practice the laying on of hands. We do not believe in an infallible human hierarchy that dispenses divine wisdom from on high.

Our story is one of joint Bible study—coming to a conclusion together by studying the scriptures together. That is why, when I was in seminary, the late Brethren historian Donald F. Durnbaugh insisted that it was wrong to speak of Alexander Mack as the founder of the Brethren movement. He referred to all eight who took part in Bible study and baptism as the eight co-founders. And he corrected anyone who stated otherwise. We're in this together.

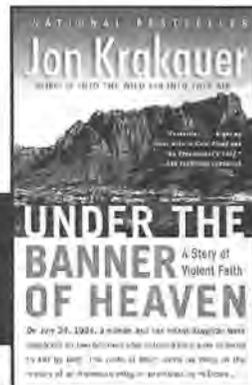
If the question is how can you tell if it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking to you, then I would suggest, with fear and trembling, that in the end God's Spirit does not lead us to use authority and power over others for our own benefit and pleasure to the degradation and humiliation of others.

I've heard the formulation that Brethren believe the Bible is the Word of God, and that we interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, and the New Testament in the light of Jesus. It seems to me that if our actions are modeled after the words and life

of Jesus then we are on safer ground when it comes to following what we believe to be the Spirit of God. When we claim God as a personal authority for self-serving activity and assertions, we may be on shakier ground. When we are in direct contradiction to the radical servanthood displayed by Jesus when he washed the feet of his disciples, or the liberating dictates outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, it is time to question ourselves or those who are making those contradictory assertions.

Can we ever be 100 percent certain this side of the grave? I doubt it. But that alone should teach us caution and humility. And so should this book. Trust me, if you start it, you won't be able to put it down. Nor will you easily forget it. **W**

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



**ABOUT THE BOOK**

**Title:** *Under The Banner of Heaven: The Story of Violent Faith.* **Author:** Jon Krakauer.  
**Published:** Doubleday, 2003, 2004. **Pages:** 432 (paperback). **Cost:** Paperback list price is \$14.95.

**Salvation is what's important**

I'm writing in response to the letter "Our name sends wrong message," by Carol Wise in the December 2006 MESSENGER. Ms. Wise wrote, "The problem is not that those women erred in their assessment of us; the problem is that we simply don't care enough about them to discomfort ourselves to correct the situation," as she criticizes the Church of the Brethren for having a name that, in her opinion, and that of the other women mentioned, points to a male-dominated, -oriented, and women-excluding church.

However, the women and Ms. Wise did err in their assessment for a number of reasons. One main reason is a misunderstanding of the word "brethren." In the Bible the term is not used exclusively to refer to men. In the Old Testament it is generally a term of affection for a relative, companion, acquaintance, or friend and is used many times to refer to Israel as a nation (the whole nation—women, children, and men). In the New Testament the term is used fraternally and is not gender-based. It is often used to refer to the church as a whole (men, women, and children).

Rather than looking for ways to criticize the church for having a name that the uninitiated may use as a point of

contention, perhaps for other agendas, all of us should be quick to do as the Apostle Peter suggests in 1 Peter 3:15: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Perhaps then and only then are we really addressing the important issues: the salvation offered to all who will believe and our ability to express an apologetic for that "faith once delivered to the saints."

**Vincent E. Cable**  
Uniontown, Pa.

**Obey all the scriptures**

I have recently gotten to know the larger part of the Church of the Brethren. I was quite shocked and disappointed at what it has become on the whole. I have actually become quite embarrassed and ashamed when I tell people that I am a member.

The issue I would like to address today is the church's current thoughts on war. Our claim that "all war is sin" comes from the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13), and "Love your enemies and pray for those

who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

Over the course of this year, I have heard people talking about how bad the war is. I have heard people talk about our president with such anger and hatred it amazed me. Unfortunately, many people see President Bush as their most hated enemy. My question is, if the president is your enemy, then doesn't the verse "Love your enemies" apply to him also? Why is it okay to persecute and hate him? Does not that verse in the Bible also include our president, or anyone else in authority?

Here's another angle I'd like to throw in on this matter. We oppose war because Jesus told us it was wrong—it's a sin. We have protests, we write letters, and we think it is a huge accomplishment to get arrested for protesting the war. We do all of this because we feel that war and killing are sin; the Bible clearly states that. Why, then, do we completely ignore everything else that the Bible clearly states is wrong? I'm talking about abortion, gay marriage, sex before marriage, etc. When and where did Jesus state that "Thou shalt not kill" and "Love your enemies" were the only two verses in the Bible that we are to heed?

A lot of people tell me, "Keep an open

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**Featured Presenters:** *Bernie Fuska*, pastor of the Timberville (Va.) church, will speak at the Bridgewater event. *Wally Landes*, pastor of the Palmyra (Pa.) church, will present at The Cedars and Hillcrest events. Cost for the one-day training events will be \$15 per person. Registration materials are available at ABC's website, [www.brethren-caregivers.org](http://www.brethren-caregivers.org).

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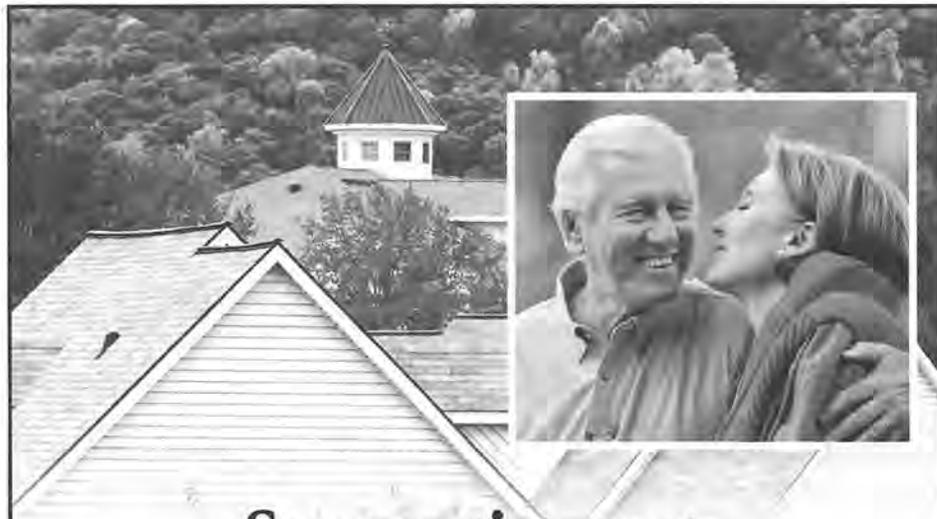
April 21 — Hillcrest, La Verne, Calif. — 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

June 9 — The Cedars, McPherson, Kan. — 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.



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mind. Don't be closed-minded towards gays, abortion, etc." If we are to be open-minded towards these specific things Jesus said were wrong, then we should be as equally open-minded to war and killing. One verse in the Bible does not and should not hold more weight than any other verse. One commandment does not and should not hold more weight than another.

My understanding of the Church of the Brethren as a peace church was that we seek and strive for peace as our first and foremost option, that we are willing to serve our enemy (1 Pet. 3:11). Now I believe that war is wrong, killing is a sin. I am also living in reality with what the scripture says: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen . . ." (Matt. 24:6). Jesus tells us that we are to strive for peace, but that peace will not come worldwide until the return of Christ.

So while I agree that war is wrong, I also understand that the world will not live in peace until that day Jesus comes again. In so doing, I do not believe that war is the only issue on which we are to place our focus. I think it is time for everyone to pick the entire Bible back up, re-read it, and take to heart all of the scriptures, not just one.

**Lucy Gardner**  
Havre, Mont.

### Brethren must confront obesity

I appreciated very much Marvin E. Blough's letter [September 2006] asking us Brethren to focus on major issues; I agree that we too often get "worked up" over issues that are peripheral (like someone else's sex life) while ignoring the ones over which we should have more concern.

In this same spirit, I wish that more conscientious Brethren, including ministers, would take seriously the epidemic of obesity that plagues our nation. The sin of gluttony is quite fashionable.

I have heard almost no mention of this stewardship of the body until the *BRF (Brethren Revival Fellowship) Witness* published "Overeating: A Weighty Subject" recently. Not only are we not taking care of our bodies as a temple of God, but we are indulging in excess while others have less that needed. I would like to challenge other Brethren to take gluttony seriously.

**Wilma Ammermann**  
Roanoke, Va.

**Editor's note:** Wilma Ammermann was killed in a car crash in Roanoke shortly after sending in this letter. MESSENGER expresses its condolences to her family.

**Time to be vulnerable**

We live in a society where our theology and praxiology (the study of human conduct) tend to be very influenced by themes like success, power, prosperity, consumerism—and these have become increasingly better marketed with sound bites and advertising that are practically taken for granted. Even our crosses are golden, beautiful, charming. I believe that into this mix, our context, we need more of a theology and praxiology of vulnerability that would be more faithful to biblical themes of incarnation, grace, hospitality, humility, and the cross.

When I was in grade school we had a field trip to a place where a village of Christian Native Americans had been massacred by white men. In college I was in a work project in the inner city of Baltimore. In seminary my senior research project was "Racism in American Christianity." In 1984 I went with my wife, Mim, to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace. Through the years I have been involved with issues especially crucial to women, including those who have been sexually abused. In recent years I have become more involved with my lesbian and gay sisters and brothers.

I have been deeply moved and inspired by people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero, and Martin Luther King Jr. And from our Brethren circles I also include Ted Studebaker, Anna Mow, Art and Peggy Gish, Cliff and Arlene Kindy.

I believe that as we continue to stand and move with our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers we will be immensely helped along the lines of a faithful and scriptural theology and praxiology of vulnerability. Certainly Annual Conference is one place we want to enhance and model this faithfulness and vulnerability that Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes. It is now time not only to grant BMC (Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests) a booth at Annual Conference, but to warmly welcome them to have a booth as they continue to help us walk in the light with Jesus in vulnerability.

It is now high time to make room for not only those who point to a few scriptures that they believe put homosexuality in a negative light, but also to make room for those of us who see the welcoming of our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers as being founded on the bedrock issue of peace and justice—and is part of our being faithful in our walk with Jesus.

**Roger Eberly**  
Milford, Ind.

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- 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)
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## New Members

- Chiques**, Manheim, Pa.: Alex Faus, Andrea Faus
- Copper Hill**, Va.: John Moran, Annie Moran, Deborah Stump, Michael Stump
- County Line**, Champion, Pa.: Jonathan Conn, Dale Barnhart
- Curryville**, Pa.: Andy Worthing, Erin Worthing, Matt Replogle, Michelle Replogle
- Dayton**, Va.: Pam Miller
- Ephrata**, Pa.: Doug Dillon, Connie Fink, Dennis Fink, Kayla Weaver, Samantha Weaver, Shannon Graybill, Sally Bowman, Kathy Buck, Emily Crane, Gail Dillon, Marie Enck, Ron Schlegel, Patricia Schlegel, Bob Shepp, Scott Williams
- Frederick**, Md.: Marvin Ausherman, Lisa Ausherman, Stuart Bunting, Heather Bunting, Roger Crist, Ginny Crist, Julia Halusa, Goran Halusa, Johnia Hamrick, Barbara Hamrick, Chuck Less, Cindy Less, Karen Lucado, David Main, Ray Reise, Emma Reise, Billy Richardson, Michael Thigpen, Lynn Thigpen
- Geiger**, Friedens, Pa.: Amanda Urban, Benjamin Urban, Christopher Charlton, Amy Miller
- Hempfield**, Manheim, Pa.: Floyd Myers, Mary Jane Myers, Karen Sanders, John Layman, Peggie Layman
- Highland Avenue**, Elgin, Ill.: Harold Graves, Carson McFadden, Laura Thompson, Lisa Thompson, Dan Baker, David Doudt, Kim Ebersole, Verda Faw, Stan Noffsinger, Debbie Noffsinger, Evan Noffsinger, Caleb Noffsinger, Sue Snyder, Chuck White, Carol White
- Indian Creek**, Harleysville, Pa.: Larson Hart, David Houck, Jasmine May, Helen Schlegel, Frank Schlegel
- Kokomo**, Ind.: Steve Schrock, Jeff Ryals, Heather Swisher
- Midway**, Lebanon, Pa.: Sylvia Hitz, Derek Hitz, Angela Villanueva, Anna Groff
- Modesto**, Calif.: Gaile James, Russ James
- North Liberty**, Ind.: Kari Futa, Becky Harness, Jennifer Jackson, Maggie Shoue
- North Webster**, Ind.: Deborah Kelley, Larry Kelley, Terry Lindsey, Sue Lindsey, Jason Davenport, Joshua Hensley, Keanu Hensley, Katrina Simbeck
- Oakton**, Vienna, Va.: Ted Barkley, Karl Wilkerson, Bridgette Beach
- Panther Creek**, Adel, Iowa: Bill Broyles, Dorothy Broyles, David Garoutte, Kelcey Garrett, Hanna Marshall, Emily Reynolds, Brandon Snyder, Mary Snyder
- Parker Ford**, Pottstown, Pa.: Sara Hicks, Jim Hollen, Betty Hollen, Wesley Trumbauer, Sr., Elizabeth Trumbauer, Linda Wood
- Philadelphia**, First, Wyndmoor, Pa.: Craig Braey
- Pleasant View**, Fayetteville,

- W.Va.: Noah Riner, Keith Burnside, Danielle Lewis
- Snake Spring Valley**, Everett, Pa.: Gary Koozts, Jackie Koozts, Monica Leonard
- Topeka**, Kan.: Betty Stapleton, Jerri Hite
- Troutville**, Va.: Dale Bryant, Edith Bryant, Shirley Funkhouser, Cloggett Funkhouser, Brian Huffman, Kathy Huffman, Zack Huffman, Angela Haranzo
- White Oak**, Manheim, Pa.: Natali Cassel, Todd Hensey, Diana High, Jonathan Longenecker, Merle Martins, Danielle Ober, Jason Laughman
- Winter Park**, Fla.: Tanya Hastler, Sarah Neel

## Anniversaries

- Boose**, Raymond R. and Mary Beth, Martinsburg, Pa., 60
- Clatterbuck**, George and Florine, Charlottesville, Va., 55
- Geary**, Clyde and Charlotte, Champion, Pa., 60
- Hoover**, Leroy and Ruth, Roaring Spring, Pa., 60
- Johnson**, Richard and Mary Lou, Paris, Ohio, 50
- Keim**, Kirby and Patsy, Goshen, Ind., 50
- Kinzie**, William and Elizabeth, Roanoke, Va., 50
- Quarry**, Lloyd and Elizabeth, Martinsburg, Pa., 60
- Wolford**, Virgil and Twila, Dry Fork, W. Va., 60

## Deaths

- Alt**, Arthur Canter, 93, Valley Bend, W.Va., Oct. 16
- Alt**, Elsie Mae Coleman, 86, Petersburg, W.Va., Oct. 24
- Alt**, Raymond Clinton, 88, Landes, W.Va., Nov. 9
- Anderson-Scott**, Cheri Lea, 37, Saint Helens, Ore., Nov. 22
- Arndt**, Anna, 86, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 9
- Arnold**, Virginia, 91, Frederick, Md., May 22
- Becker**, Anna, 82, Carlisle, Pa., Dec. 25
- Beedle**, Turner J., Jr., 78, Edinburg, Va., Nov. 19
- Bensing**, Zenobia, 94, Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 7
- Bixler**, Calantha, 78, Carlisle, Pa., Sept. 3
- Bohn**, Clyde, 70, Woodsboro, Md., April 24
- Boitnott**, Gladys Jewell Peters, 85, Rocky Mount, Va., Oct. 25
- Bosserman**, James Stuart, Jr., 64, Stuarts Draft, Va., Nov. 18
- Brashears**, Kathleen, 59, Frederick, Md., April 24
- Breeden**, Jeanne M., 68, Frederick, Md., March 22, 2006
- Brown**, Dorothy, 85, Frederick, Md., March 17, 2006
- Brunk**, Nelson R., 89, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 15
- Bush**, Clyde, 91, Curryville, Pa., Nov. 21
- Butterworth**, Lydia A., 46, Frederick, Md., Oct. 29
- Button**, Nick, 67, Adel, Iowa, Oct. 17
- Carr**, T. Ruth Reedy, 92, Timberville, Va., Oct. 27
- Chrisman**, Janice Mae Cabbage, 60, Staunton, Va., Oct. 12
- Clicik**, Cora Turner, 90, Mount Jackson, Va., Sept. 9
- Cooper**, Carlin Loric, 59, Hinton, Va., Oct. 7
- Courtney**, Gladys Elaine, 86, Luray, Va., Oct. 27
- Coyner**, Trisha Nicole, 17,

- Stuarts Draft, Va., Oct. 8
- Craighead**, Moyer J., 86, Palmyra, Pa., Dec. 28
- Crites**, Sylvia Mae, 85, Moorefield, W.Va., Nov. 26
- Curry**, Annie Catherine, 86, Dayton, Va., Nov. 8
- Dean**, Virginia Ruth Josephine, 87, Old Fields, W.Va., Dec. 28
- Delawder**, Elmer Franklin, 90, Basye, Va., Sept. 30
- Dickerhoof**, Ruth Ann, 73, Paris, Ohio, Sept. 16
- Diehl**, Paul Josiah, 74, Dayton, Va., Dec. 1
- Dilling**, Ronald E., 71, Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 8
- Dillon**, Mark, 54, Troutville, Va., July 16
- Driver**, Frederick A., 75, Blue Ridge, Va., Dec. 15
- Ebersole**, Marie Bendsen Beahm, 87, Anderson, Ind., Dec. 21
- Edwards**, M. Allana, 75, Frederick, Md., Nov. 16
- Enberg**, Barbara Davis, 84, La Verne, Calif., Dec. 21, 2005
- Esworthy**, Kelsey L., 18, Frederick, Md., Oct. 15
- Filbrun**, George, 87, Brookville, Ohio, Nov. 18
- Fisher**, Shirley T., 77, Frederick, Md., July 31
- Fitzsimons**, William Ezra, 96, Grottoes, Va., Dec. 19
- Garber**, Donald W., 73, Waynesboro, Va., Nov. 2
- Garrison**, Ruth, 92, Modesto, Calif., Dec. 24
- Gibble**, Valera, 78, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 18
- Grape**, Emma, 102, Westminster, Md., Dec. 5
- Grossnickle**, Janet, 61, Frederick, Md., July 14
- Grove**, Ruth Christina Bodkin, 88, Staunton, Va., Nov. 27
- Guyer**, Chester, 86, Woodbury, Pa., June 2
- Hanlin**, Hilda M., 78, Leesburg, Ind., Sept. 23
- Harding**, James, Jr., 67, Frederick, Md., July 23
- Harley**, Wilbur, 89, Lancaster, Pa., July 27
- Hayes**, Bill, 84, Denver, Pa., Aug. 14
- Hershey**, Charles, 98, Manheim, Pa., Dec. 18
- Hershey**, Helen, 96, Manheim, Pa., April 21
- Hetrick**, Naomi, 88, Somerset, Pa., Nov. 27
- High**, Virginia, 79, Pottstown, Pa., Jan. 27, 2006
- Hipkins**, John W., 91, Frederick, Md., Oct. 22
- Hipkins**, Louise, 86, Frederick, Md., Feb. 17, 2006
- Hollar**, Orland Jonathan, Jr., 80, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 1
- Hoover**, Irene E., 84, Woodstock, Va., Nov. 4
- Hurst**, Barbara Jean Mote, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 22
- Hussey**, Loreen Suvilla, 91, Briery Branch, Va., Oct. 18
- Johnson**, Anna, 91, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 22
- Johnson**, Charles Carson, Sr., 80, Fort Valley, Va., Nov. 15
- Johnson**, Dorothea M., 83, Modesto, Calif., Dec. 14
- Kagarise**, Barbara, 81, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 17
- Kline**, Carson Victor, 91, Timberville, Va., Nov. 16
- Leckrone**, Marjorie, 91, North Manchester, Ind., Dec. 14
- Leftwich**, Danny R., 60, Toast, N.C., Jan. 1
- Levers**, Roy, 80, Mansfield, Ohio, Dec. 31
- Lichty**, Quinter, 81, Waterloo, Iowa, Dec. 10

- Lolling**, Deborah R., 88, McPherson, Kan., Dec. 7
- Malcolm**, Selah R., 100, McDowell, Va., Sept. 9
- Martin**, Nancy, 67, Frederick, Md., Feb. 5, 2006
- Mason**, Janet Una Stayner, 79, Broadway, Va., Dec. 20
- Michael**, Mary Jane Anderson, 82, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 16
- Miller**, Gerald Kenneth, 70, Dayton, Va., Dec. 1
- Miller**, Glenn, 75, Spring Grove, Pa., Dec. 7
- Mitchell**, Mary Ann, 64, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 14
- Mohler**, Fern Hill, 81, Linville, Va., Sept. 30
- Mongold**, C. Franklin, 84, Hinton, Va., Oct. 18
- Moreland**, Virgil Edwin, 75, Scherr, W.Va., Nov. 26
- Moyer**, Annette, 69, Lititz, Pa., Nov. 22
- Moyers**, Freda Mae, 70, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 22
- Moyers**, Ray Melvin, 60, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 24
- Musselman**, Amos, 64, Fredericksburg, Pa., Dec. 8
- Neiderhiser**, Melvin, 91, Champion, Pa., Dec. 10
- Obenshain**, David, 88, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 4
- Plaine**, Jacob Edward, 77, Frederick, Md., Nov. 4
- Polk**, Catherine Elizabeth, 86, Edinburg, Va., Oct. 1
- Price**, Robert, 85, Carlisle, Pa., Oct. 22
- Propst**, Retha M., 85, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 24
- Rader**, Lucille, 103, Fincastle, Va., Oct. 9
- Rexrode**, Stanley Franklin, 67, Criders, Va., Dec. 25
- Rinehart**, Charles, 79, Spindale, N.C., Nov. 23
- Rizzo**, Josephine, 88, Frederick, Md., April 15
- Rodgers**, Donald William, 53, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 20
- Rohrbaugh**, Randy Gene, 49, Augusta, W.Va., Nov. 6
- Runion**, Otis Franklin, 82, Broadway, Va., Dec. 28
- Rush**, Lacy Dolan, Jr., 20, Mauretown, Va., Oct. 17
- Schlosser**, Thelma, 86, Ephrata, Pa., Sept. 17
- Semler**, Catherine Virginia, 89, Sharpsburg, Md., Dec. 17
- Senn**, Betty, 80, Dixon, Ill., Dec. 11
- Shafer**, Louise, 81, Frederick, Md., Jan. 12, 2006
- Shelly**, Stella, 91, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 2
- Shenk**, Leroy Leonard, 77, Luray, Va., Dec. 8
- Shenk**, Ola M. Rodeffer, 92, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 14
- Shockey**, Wayne William, Sr., 74, Moorefield, W.Va., Nov. 29
- Shrader**, William Walton, 71, Franklin, W.Va., Nov. 6
- Sites**, Arlena Rebecca, 72, Quicksburg, Va., Sept. 12
- Smith**, Chester Randolph, 78, Criders, Va., Oct. 22
- Sortzi**, Gladys Loretta Kirby, 80, Edinburg, Va., Oct. 20
- Spence**, Sharon Kay Ritchie, 50, New Market, Va., Dec. 25
- Stauffer**, Erma F., 78, Ephrata, Pa., Dec. 21
- Stevens**, Barbara Louise, 81, Adamstown, Md., Dec. 14
- Swomley**, Charles E., 88, Frederick, Md., Dec. 7
- Thompson**, Robert Willard, 84, Shenandoah, Va., Dec. 22
- Thorne**, Rosella Grove Vance, 88, Dorcas, W.Va., Dec. 18
- Treese**, Edna Mae, 74,

- Martinsburg, Pa., July 4
- Wachter**, Rachel, 62, Frederick, Md., Dec. 25
- Walters**, June Ida, 81, Frederick, Md., Nov. 28
- Weaver**, Alice, 88, Greenville, Ohio, Dec. 29
- Weaver**, Frank, 51, Parker Ford, Pa., Aug. 26
- Weaver**, Kenneth, 87, Martinsburg, Pa., Aug. 28
- Welty**, Robert, 58, Parker, Pa., July 25
- Wharton**, Velma B., 90, North Liberty, Ind., Sept. 8
- Wheeler**, Evelyn Mae Michael, 85, Mount Solon, Va., Nov. 19
- Wine**, Leda Ruth, 91, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 8
- Wine**, Margaret Early, 85, Mount Sidney, Va., Dec. 20
- Wittig**, Alma Ruth, 77, Fulks Run, Va., Dec. 13
- Zeiset**, Horace, 90, Akron, Pa., Aug. 31

## Licensings

- Beares**, Kimberly, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Reisterstown, Md.), July 9
- Brown**, Keith, S. Ohio Dist. (Potsdam, Ohio), Dec. 10
- Frei**, Glen, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Springfield, Coopersburg, Pa.), Oct. 29
- Howdyshehl**, Darren, Shen. Dist. (Briery Branch, Dayton, Va.), Nov. 12
- Martin**, Curvin, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Heidelberg, Reistville, Pa.), Oct. 1
- Payne**, Gregory Scott, Shen. Dist. (Mountain View, McGaheysville, Va.), Dec. 5
- Winstch**, Misty, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Annville, Pa.), Nov. 5
- Zapata**, Mercedes, Pac. S.W. Dist. (Principe de Paz, Santa Ana, Calif.), April 2

## Ordinations

- Diaz**, Jaime, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Iglesia de Los Hermanos, Castaner, P.R.), Oct. 14
- Dykes**, Jeremy H., Southeastern Dist. (Jackson Park, Jonesborough, Tenn.), Dec. 10
- Long**, Jared, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Akron, Pa.), April 2
- Naill**, Janet, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Faithful Servants, Frederick, Md.), Dec. 10
- Perez-Borges**, Hector, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Iglesia de Los Hermanos Cristo El Senor, Vega Baja, P.R.), Oct. 14
- Sanchez**, Pedro, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Long Run, Lehighton, Pa.), Dec. 10
- Wenger**, David, Atl. N.E. Dist. (White Oak, Manheim, Pa.), Aug. 20
- Williams**, Flora, S/C Ind. Dist. (Lafayette, Ind.), June 18

## Placements

- Ballew**, Joel, from pastor, Fairview, Mount Clinton, Harrisonburg, Va., to pastor, Lebanon, Mount Sidney, Va., Jan. 1
- Black**, Larry G., from pastor, Beachdale, Berlin, Pa., to pastor, Hartsville, Ohio, Jan. 1
- Brunk**, James R., pastor, The Well of Tucson, Tucson, Ariz., May 20
- Clark**, Randy Scott, co-pastor, Romney, W.Va., Dec. 29
- Eshelman**, Robert, pastor of congregational care, Ephrata, Pa., Jan. 1

# Inconvenient truths

**O**f all the stories MESSENGER has run in recent years, few, if any, have drawn a more heated response (no pun intended) than a feature on global warming.

That July 2004 article, by David Radcliff, talked about our responsibility as Christians related to the earth, calling climate change “a faith issue.” He asserted, however, that most Americans were “asleep at the wheel” when it came to the long list of environmental concerns.



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

A number of Brethren wrote back criticizing this position, sometimes in strong words. They suggested that the facts were fabrications, and that it wasn't a faith issue at all. One even said that a warmer climate would be a good thing.

But in the two and a half years since then, environmental data have continued to flow in an increasingly alarming stream. Virtually every study seems to bolster the concerns that some of these so-called alarmists have been raising for years.

Those concerns received a greater profile last year with the release of *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary-style film that propelled former Vice President Al Gore into unlikely movie star status. The film had its detractors, too, but the DVD began 2007 in the top 10 list of major bookstore chains.

Unlike the somewhat-cheesy 2004 Hollywood release *The Day After Tomorrow*, which showed a global climate spinning out of control in rapid fashion, Gore's picture attempted to ground the issue on a burden of proof built by first-hand

On the political front, Congress is taking a new look at climate change, with Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chair of the Senate environmental committee, telling MSNBC that “time is running out.” The World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches both have programs looking at “eco-justice” and the potential far-reaching effects, especially for the world's poor.

The Weather Channel a few months ago launched a segment called “The Climate Code” as prominent meteorologists have noted disturbing trends. And most recently, the CEOs of 10 major corporations (including Caterpillar, Alcoa, BP America, and General Electric)—who would seem to have the most to lose with stricter environmental laws—called on the government to back mandatory greenhouse-gas pollution reduction and establish targets for reductions.

So with all that going on, why have many Christians been so slow to offer support? Perhaps some of it is politics; Gore and Boxer and some other supporters are admitted liberals, and climate change has been among issues caught up in a polarized political atmosphere. Perhaps it feels less important among other concerns perceived as more pressing. Perhaps some really do believe people are just being alarmists.

There are signs that the tide is changing. Some evangelical groups that had expressed opposition in the past joined with leading scientists in January to call for urgent action. The issue seems to be making its way onto more church agendas and into more conversations.

Even if it was simply a blip in the grand cycle of weather or the data were all just a mistake or an elaborate hoax, it would seem to hurt us little to do everything we can to be the best possible stewards of God's earth. Virtually all indications, however, suggest that much more is at stake.

Whatever one may think about the rest of Gore's film, he had the adjective right: “incon-

**Even if it was simply a blip in the grand cycle of weather or the data were all just a mistake or an elaborate hoax, it would seem to hurt us little to do everything we can to be the best possible stewards of God's earth. Virtually all indications, however, suggest that much more is at stake.**

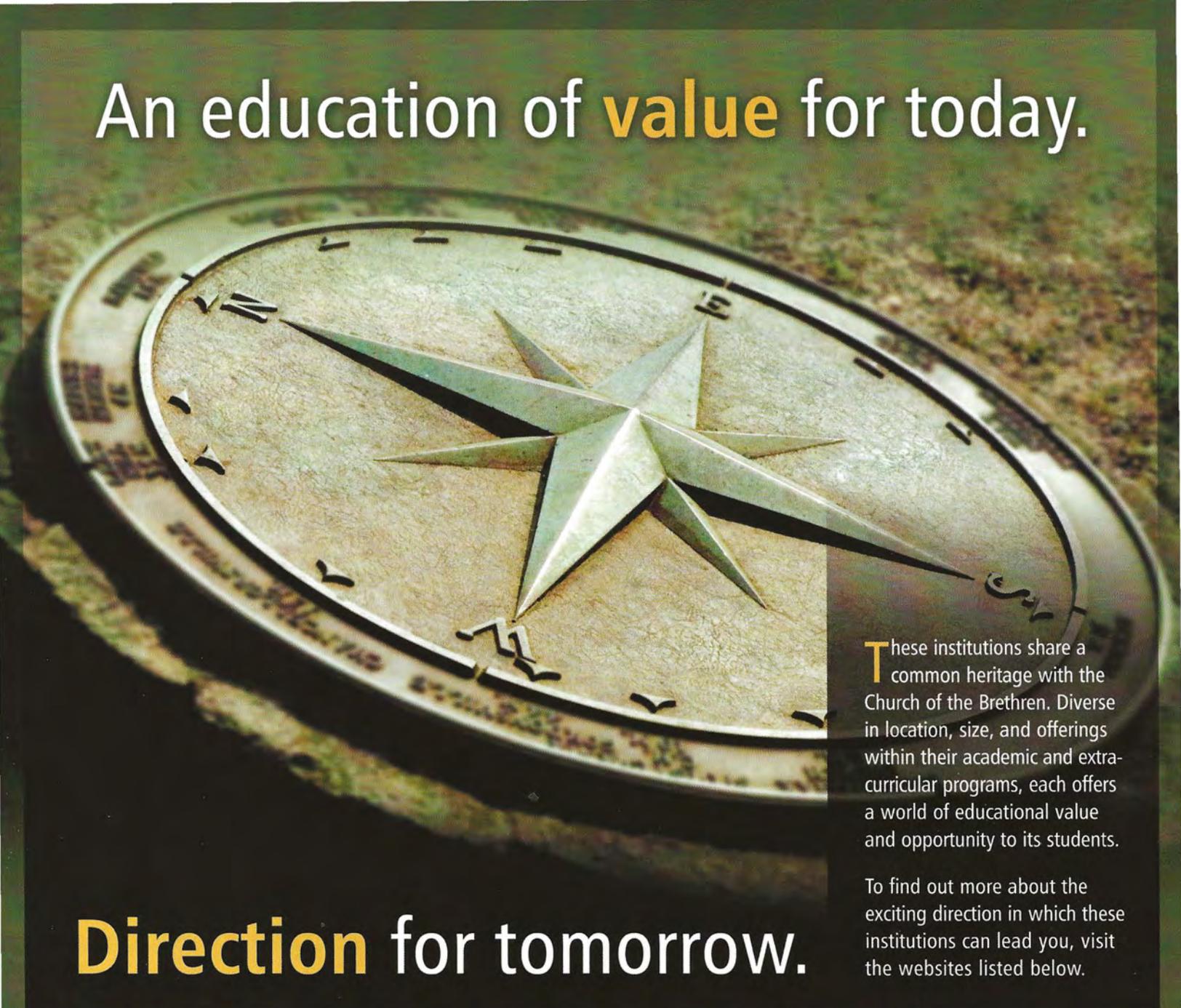
observations and scientific research. Much of the footage is simply Gore in lecture halls, giving a Powerpoint program of data and compelling simulations.

Gore is not alone in his assessments. Nicholas Stern, former chief economist for the World Bank, said last fall that “urgent action on global warming was vital,” according to a CNN report. British Prime Minister Tony Blair has put out a call for the G-8 nations to make concrete plans on climate issues. *USA Today* recently ran an update from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noting an “explosion of new data” backing global warming concerns.

venient.” Having to take a hard look at ourselves, at the way our industrial culture has drained natural resources, at the possibility of having to make changes in our lifestyle for the greater good of the planet and our neighbors in Africa and elsewhere who are already suffering from climate shifts—those can be highly inconvenient and uncomfortable steps.

But faith is full of inconvenient truths: loving our neighbors, caring for the poor, being peacemakers, leaving everything behind to follow Jesus. It's not the easiest path. When creation is groaning, we may need to go the extra mile to heed its cries, too.—Ed. *W*

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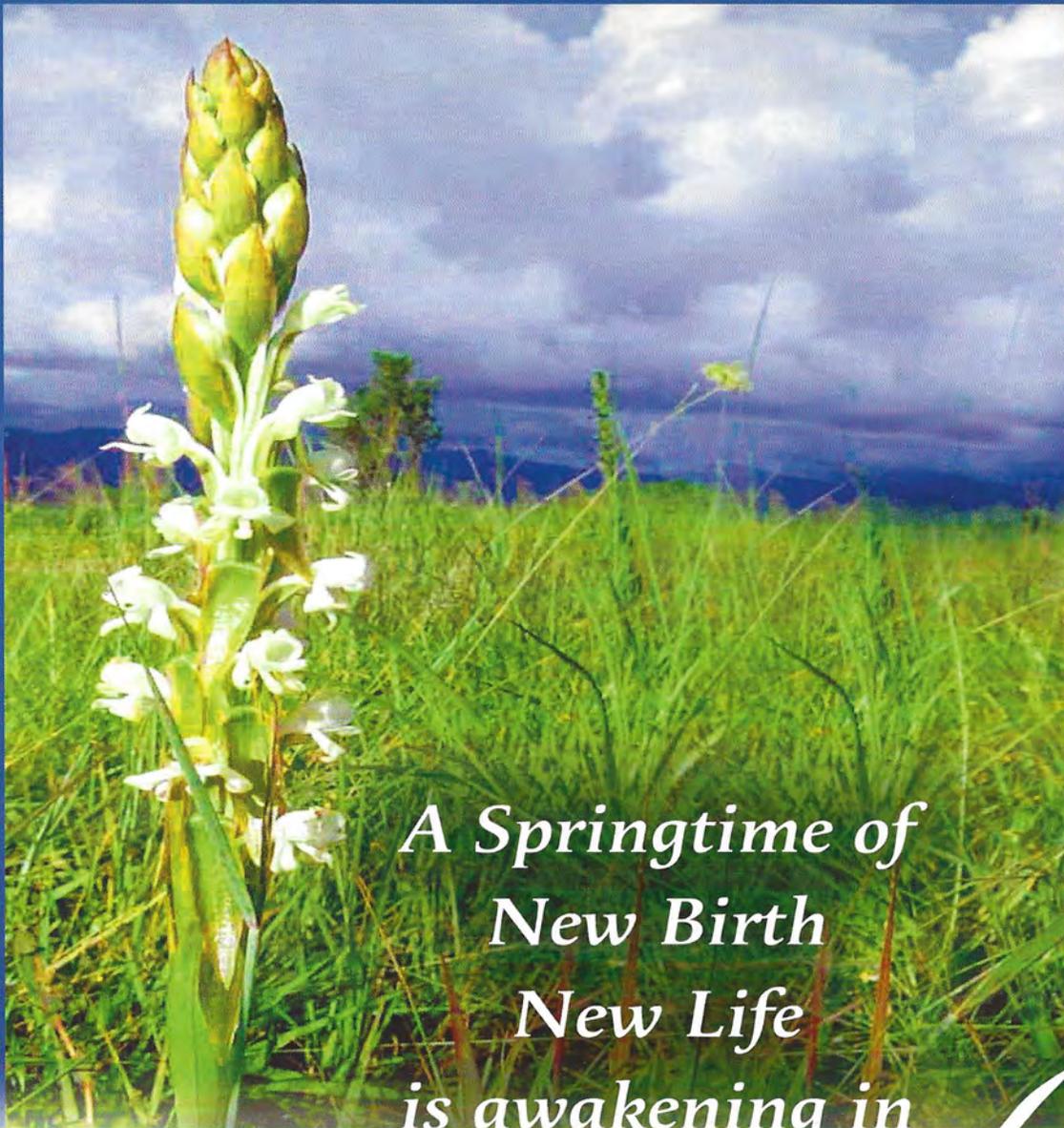
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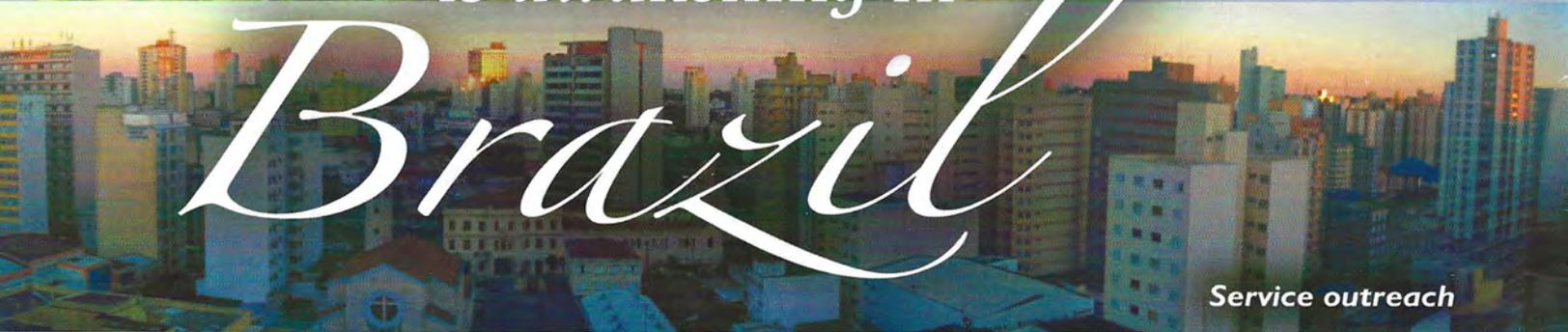
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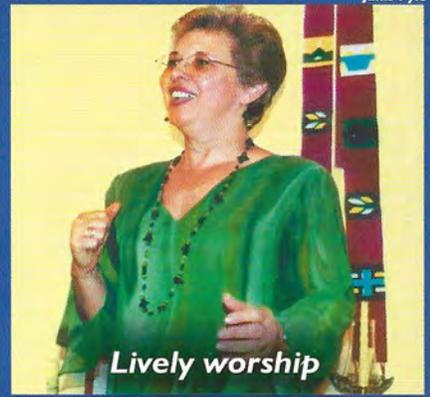
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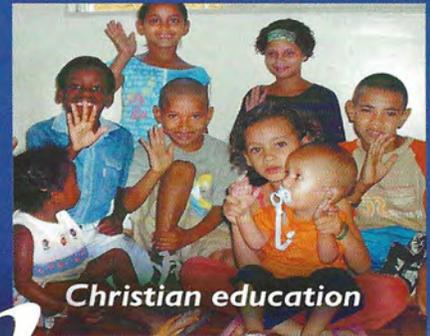
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