Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

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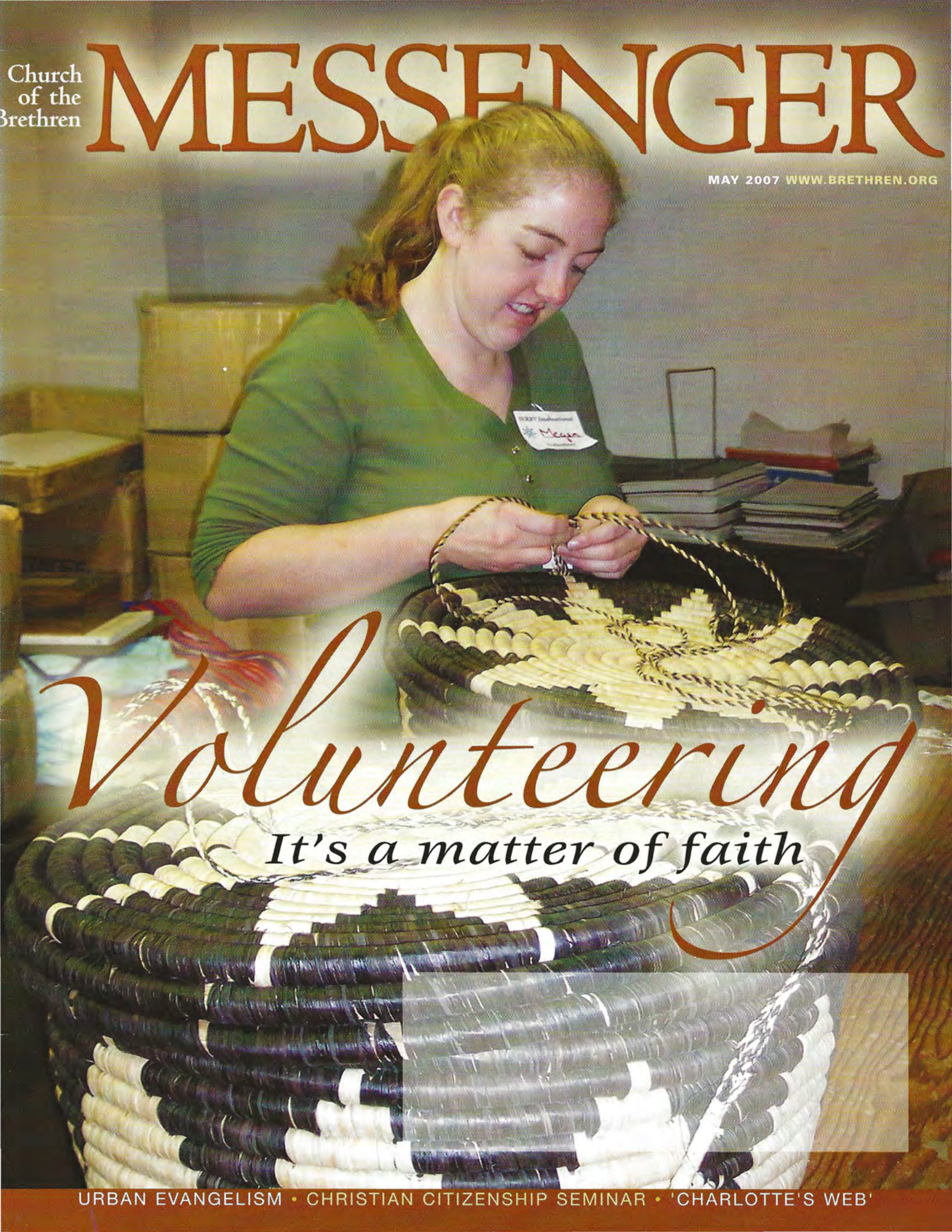

Volunteering

It's a matter of faith

URBAN EVANGELISM • CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR • 'CHARLOTTE'S WEB'

Congregational Life/ Global Ministries Dinner

Tuesday, July 3, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

Annual Conference - Crown Plaza Ballroom, Cleveland City Center

Growing the Church the Anabaptist Way

A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH PLANTER SHARES HIS INSIGHTS.

Speaker: Bishop Craig Sider

As Bishop of the Atlantic and Southeast Conferences of the Brethren in Christ Church, Craig Sider has oversight of 86 congregations. Prior to this assignment, he served as church planting pastor for 11 years in Oakville, Ontario, a suburb of Toronto. He attended Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky (M. Div). He and his wife Laura are parents of three school-aged children.

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Annual Conference
Monday, July 2nd
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

MAY 2007 VOL.156 NO.5 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

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

Church of the Brethren
MESSENGER

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

Genelle Wine

ONTHECOVER

Currently there are about 100 Brethren Volunteer Service workers demonstrating another way of living across the United States and around the world. Some are just out of high school, some just out of college or elsewhere in young adulthood, some are older adults. But they all demonstrate a similar passion: Sharing a bit of their life with those in need. In the cover photo, BVS worker Megan Carter helps to sort and price baskets in the SERRV warehouse during a BVS orientation in New Windsor, Md. (Photo by Genelle Wine).

8 Why volunteer?
Every year, dozens of people offer up a year or more of their lives to serve at a Brethren Volunteer Service project. Others volunteer in more short-term ways. While many in the world are focused on getting ahead personally, why do some choose to focus instead on serving others?

12 Ministry where the rubber meets the road
Wes Richard co-pastors an urban congregation in Ohio, and the unique ministry that occurs there has taught him a variety of lessons along the way. Meeting material needs can be challenging, but he urges: Don't give up.

14 Taking the pulse of health care
Youth from across the nation headed to New York and Washington, D.C., in late March for the denomination's Christian Citizenship Seminar. This year's focus: Health care issues at home and abroad.

16 Lights are bright for 'Christian Broadway'
Sight & Sound Theatres are big business in Pennsylvania's Lancaster County. The faith-based productions offered there are top-notch and a powerful outreach ministry. And it all started with the Church of the Brethren.

18 Hosea: Unrequited love
The book of Hosea uses a marriage metaphor to demonstrate a disloyal relationship between Israel and God. Amid this brokenness, however, there is hope.

DEPARTMENTS

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

This month's cover story is by Todd Flory, a volunteer who brings experience in journalism (including a stint with the *McPherson Sentinel* in Kansas) to his current work. He's one of the many talented volunteers who have served at the denominational offices in Elgin, Ill., through Brethren Volunteer Service.

The Elgin-based BVSers are involved in church-wide leadership through positions in areas such as the BVS office, Youth and Young Adult office, information services, and the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. In other locations, BVSers are serving General Board programs in disaster response and Global Mission Partnerships.

This all seems pretty normal to those who've seen this arrangement for years, but it's not necessarily typical of all church organizations. I'm one who's grateful that we do things this way—grateful for those who give a year to serve the church, and grateful to the church for making these opportunities available. A generation ago I was one of those BVSers, and the experience set the direction for my life.

WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Such experiences are life-changing for individuals; they're also life-changing for the church. In March, General Board members and staff engaged in a question-and-answer session with guest speaker Martha Grace Reese about her new book, *Unbinding the Gospel*, a study and how-to guide on evangelism within mainline churches. This was her provocative advice to denominations wanting to grow and thrive: Invest one-third of your money in young people.

Whatever the right fraction to aim for, I have to think we're on the right track: A volunteer program that challenges individuals to go against the culture and serve without pay. A General Board that incorporates a cadre of young adult volunteers into its ongoing staffing. Ministry Summer Service, which gives young people a chance to experiment with different kinds of ministry. A National Youth Conference that inspires several thousand high school youth to catch a vision beyond their local settings. A doubling this year of workcamp opportunities. The annual Christian Citizenship Seminar, held just a few weeks ago. A new national junior high conference that helps lay the groundwork for a life of discipleship. Christian education resources that start teaching the faith well before children can read.

And a brand-new effort has just been launched: Forty-two youth from across the church met in mid-April to become the Youth Heritage Team. As part of the Church of the Brethren's celebration of its 300th anniversary, these youth will travel around their districts leading programs on Brethren heritage.

A 300-year-old story carried by teenagers. What better way to embody an anniversary celebration that seeks to look backwards not for nostalgia but for the purpose of moving forward.

Wendy McFadden

HOW TO REACH US

MESSENGER
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

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

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

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

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CONGREGATIONCLOSE-UP

Unique journeys to the waters

Peoria celebrates series of baptisms, child dedications

This past December marked an important moment for Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, as it witnessed two families be baptized and dedicate children after unique journeys.

Ed and Vanessa Engelke have worshiped with the congregation for several years, following in the footsteps of Vanessa's mother, Wanda Bennett. Wanda joined the congregation when it purchased a Baptist church building. A small group of worshipers chose to stay with their beloved church and worship with the Brethren.

Joni Andrews

Ed and Vanessa Engelke joined Peoria Church of the Brethren after a family connection and a call for a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ.

After Ed participated in a "Way of Christ" weekend, he and Vanessa decided they wanted to commit themselves to Jesus and membership in the Peoria church. On Dec. 10 they took their vows—administered by pastor Dana McNeil—before the congregation and then proceeded to the baptistry.

The Freiburger family began worshipping with the Peoria church at the invitation of the Dean family, who are members. Gary, the father, has been working in the church the past several years. Their eldest son, Kyle (age 15), attended National Youth Conference last summer. Both Kyle and Gary, after meeting with the pastor, decided to dedicate themselves by baptism.

The Freiburgers have two younger sons, Brooks and Wyatt, and Gary and Pam wanted to dedicate them at the same time. It was a wonderful occasion on Dec. 24 to have a father and son baptized, and the father and mother dedicating their other sons to God.

Each time after the baptisms and dedications the congregation celebrated with cake and punch in the narthex, where everyone was encouraged to write in the memory books that were given to the new members.—**Gil Crosby**

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

"I've never been away from this dialogue about what it means to be a minority, what it means to be the other. Race relations, the whole cultural dialogue, has always been part of my journey."

—Church of the Brethren minister Valentina Satvedi, who grew up in India and was recently named co-director of Mennonite Central Committee's Anti-Racism Program

BYTHENUMBERS

67

Number of grants given from the General Board's Ministry Assistance Fund from 1999 to 2006, for a total of $56,512. The fund provides a "lifeline" for pastors and other ministerial leaders facing short-term emergency needs.

AROUND THEDENOMINATION

Northeast Atlantic Northeast held a ministry conference on "Servant Leadership for Church Renewal" April 25 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The Rev. Dr. Lou George of American Baptist Churches USA was guest speaker.... Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center (Sharpsburg, Md.) held its pig roast fundraising dinner April 22.... Ron Dilling of the Clover Creek congregation has begun as district disaster coordinator for Middle Pennsylvania.

Southeast Manuel Gonzalez began as full-time pastor for Hispanic outreach projects in Roanoke and Floyd, Va., on April 15. ... West Marva held a district-wide Bible study on "Core Beliefs, Disciplines, and Practices of the Brethren" on March 18 at the Westernport (Md.) congregation.... Shenandoah District held its 6th annual Disaster Response Auction Kick-Off Dinner March 31 at Bridgewater College, with entertainment by the Sunset Mountain Boys and a preview auction.

Midwest An "All-District Kickoff" to Northern Ohio's Springs of Living Water church revitalization initiative was held April 21 at Maple Grove Church of the Brethren in Ashland, Ohio. David S. Young is leading the initiative.... Southern Ohio, following approval by the 2006 district conference, is proceeding with plans to build a new Poplar Lodge at Inspiration Hills, and to renovate another lodge into a conference center.

Ozarks/Plains Northern Plains will hold a special insight session on the biblical authority of scripture at this year's district conference, along with a pastors' event for discussion of theological differences.... The Missouri/Arkansas executive committee awarded a $1,000 grant to Jerry and Becky Crouse and their family to help enable their attendance at the annual conference of the Dominican Republic Brethren. The Crouses previously served there as mission workers.

West This year's Pacific Southwest spring event was titled "Evangelism for the Rest of Us." Jim Henderson and Rose Madrid-Swetman led workshops at Imperial Heights Church of the Brethren in Los Angeles April 27-28.... A ladies' retreat with the theme "The Bloomery" was held April 13-15 in McCall, Idaho. ... A work weekend at Oregon's Camp Myrtlewood is scheduled for May 26-28.

Centenarian maintains a valued ministry by mail

When Gladys Grossnickle's husband died nearly 20 years ago, she asked some other widows how they got through it. Their advice: Stay busy at something you like to do.

And so she did. Gladys, who celebrated her 101st birthday in March, began writing. She would clip poetry and other bits of inspiration and write letters and send them off to people who needed a ray of sunshine. She's written to people in a variety of difficult circumstances and to others in her community of Brethren, Mich., where she's a member of Lakeview Church of the Brethren.

"I get so much enjoyment from corresponding with all kinds of people," Gladys says. "That's where I get my joy.

Walt Wiltschek

Though she turned 101 in March and is legally blind, Gladys Grossnickle continues a ministry of sending encouragement.

That's what keeps me going."

Gladys estimates that she sends out about six letters a week, adding up to thousands over the two decades in which she's carried out her ministry of pen and envelopes. She is legally blind now, so a magnification machine, family members, and friends have to help her do the work.

Still, she doesn't plan to stop any time soon.

"People don't want me to quit, even though I just scribble any more," Gladys says. "I'm going to do it somehow as best I can as long as the Lord lets me be on this earth."—**Walt Wiltschek**

Can-do attitude: *The witness commission of Greensburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren set a goal for this year's Souper Bowl of Caring: 375 cans of soup to be donated to the county's food bank, with a challenge goal of reaching 400 cans. The congregation proved more than up to the task, bringing in 530 cans for the effort.*

Pennsylvania youth group collects 100 'books for peace'

When Major Oxana Werbiansky, a member of 415th Civil Affairs Battalion from Kalamazoo, Mich., was seeking resources for an English camp in the troubled region of Kosovo, her search led her to Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

"The young Albanians don't want to speak Serbian, the young Serbians don't want to speak Albanian, but they *all* want to speak English," Werbiansky said, explaining her vision for the camp. "They dream of a future in the European Union . . . which does business in English."

She and a colleague from CARE International set up mentoring programs for small groups of teens from different ethnic groups and involved them in watching movies and putting on skits. But she also wanted to give away books in English to all the campers—a goal for which she had no budget.

So she turned to her friend Frank Ramirez, pastor of the Everett congregation. Ramirez asked Everett's youth group and leaders to be part of the project, and they quickly agreed. Soon a program called "100 Books for Peace" was born.

Ramirez cut off his beard to raise money to help ship the books. Everett members were asked to vote for or against the beard, with each dollar counting as a vote. The "Shave the Beard" forces won by a 3-to-1 margin.

The goal of 100 books was easily exceeded, and in February the church shipped 183 books to Kosovo, covering everything from classics to *National Geographic* special titles.

Illinois congregation seeks time set apart for church

Recently the area churches from Pearl City, Ill.—including Yellow Creek Church of the Brethren—began to address the need for a dedicated church night that avoided conflict with the sports schedules of area schools. The concern had been discussed before, but it seemed time to bring it up again.

Frank Ramirez

The youth group of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren pitched in for a project to send "100 Books for Peace" to Kosovo.

"First, we obtained a list of all the schools in our conference," Yellow Creek pastor Ellis Boughton said. "Then we began a letter campaign to the churches in the conference. We followed up with a meeting with the school superintendents who were on the conference committee that sets sports schedules."

The group found out that schedules are set two years in advance, but the schools were open to a dedicated church night in the future.

"One superintendent stated that the schools realize that a student with a good spiritual upbringing provides the school with a better student and society with a better citizen. Praise God!" Boughton said. "The cooperation of the schools was fantastic. . . . It sounds like a do-able thing."

The initial meetings determined that Wednesday would be the evening set aside for church activities, although school attorneys advised that it would need to be called a "community night" or "family night." The schools control the use of the buildings, so the facilities simply would not be available on Wednesdays. The plan is expected to be implemented for the 2009-2010 school year.

"We intend to keep the dialogue in place with the schools and with each church so changes in staff do not interfere with the process," Boughton said. "We also intend to circulate this idea to other conferences and other parts of the country and see what God will do. Perhaps this could be the beginning of a very good thing."

Tom Sawin

Heritage helpers: *Bridgewater (Va.) College professor Steve Watson encouraged 177 dinner guests attending the CrossRoads/Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center annual meeting Feb. 2 at Harrisonburg First Church of the Brethren to "know who we are so we know where we're going." Executive director Steve Shenk highlighted 2006 accomplishments including the official opening of the center to the public on June 18. Projects for 2007 include placing the Wash House on a permanent foundation and rebuilding the Weaver-Brunk Log House. Above, Bridgewater (Va.) pastor Robert Alley, CrossRoads board chair, welcomes guests to the annual meeting.*

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Cliff Kindy**, a member of Eel River Community Church of the Brethren near North Manchester, Ind., was honored March 14 by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne and South Bend. Bishop John M. D'Arcy presented Kindy with the first Father Tom O'Connor Light of Christ Award in Fort Wayne, according to an article in the *Indianapolis Star.* Kindy was honored for his extensive work with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). "We respect the peace churches, the Church of the Brethren, that are a prod to our consciences," D'Arcy said in the article. Kindy said he would donate the accompanying $1,000 award to CPT.

• **Valentina Satvedi**, a Church of the Brethren ordained minister and Bethany Theological Seminary graduate, has been named the new co-director of Mennonite Central Committee's Anti-Racism Program. Satvedi is also director of Urban Theological Formation for the Center for Anabaptist Leadership in Pasadena, Calif., where she works with Anabaptist congregations whose members are primarily immigrants or people of color.

• Church of the Brethren photographer **Robert Miller**, from New Carlisle, Ohio, had his work displayed in an exhibition titled "Opacity" March 1-April 30 at Carriage Hill Gallery in Huber Heights. The *Dayton Daily News* called the exhibition "a visual banquet."

• **Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren** on Feb. 4 held a mortgage-burning and rededication ceremony to celebrate paying off a $2.2 million building addition completed in 1997. The day included a slide show of construction highlights, a luncheon, singing, and sharing reflections.

• **Altoona (Pa.) Juniata Church of the Brethren** marked its 100th anniversary on April 28-29 with a concert, worship featuring Middle Pennsylvania District executive minister David Steele, and an anniversary cake. All who attended received an anniversary booklet and ribbon.

• **Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren** in Springfield, Mo., will celebrate its 50th anniversary Nov. 11. An event to mark the denomination's 300th birthday will be held simultaneously, tentatively including a district worship service and love feast.

• **Fairview Church of the Brethren** near Rocky Mount, Va., officially dedicated its new sanctuary on April 22. Virlina District executive David K. Shumate was guest speaker.

• A February *York (Pa.) Daily Record* article highlighted residents of **Brethren Village** in Lancaster, Pa., and **Cross Keys Village/The Brethren Home Community** in New Oxford, Pa., who participated in a snow tubing day at Ski Roundtop in York County. Bonnie Leibold, Alma Espenshade, and Brenda Landis of Brethren Village were pictured with the article.

• The **Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies** at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College announced a major step forward in a large fundraising campaign. In 2004, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded the Young Center a $500,000 matching grant, with the expectation that it would raise $2 million by Jan. 31, 2008. The center said in February that it had received cash and pledges totaling $1.95 million, putting it within $50,000 of the goal. A celebration of the campaign's completion was scheduled for April 5, coinciding with the Young Center's 20th anniversary.

• Church World Service (CWS) **CROP Hunger Walks** mark their 60th anniversary this year. Walks are held in some 2,000 communities across the country. They raise money for local hunger-fighting agencies as well as for the international relief and development efforts of CWS.

REMEMBERED

Rozella M. Lunkley, 87, a former Church of the Brethren missionary, died Feb. 23 at Bradner Village Health Care Center in Marion, Ind. She was a missionary and pastor's wife, serving churches and mission fields from Africa to Iowa and Indiana. A memorial service was held Feb. 28 at Marion (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, where she was a member.

Means of grace

It was the last time I would celebrate love feast at Barren Ridge Church of the Brethren, my first pastorate. A gangly youth in the congregation made it a point to sit beside me at the table in the candlelit fellowship hall.

When time came for the footwashing service, he pushed his chair back, girded himself with the towel, and knelt down to wash my feet. As my first foot came out of the water he dried it with the towel. He then bent his head even closer to my foot, as if he were going to kiss it, but instead breathed on it like one does when cleaning their glasses or a mirror, and then he began to polish the top of my foot with the towel. When he was finished polishing my foot he looked up at me with the biggest grin on his face before quickly turning his attention to washing, drying, and polishing my other foot. I was deeply moved by his playful act of love and respect. God was present to me in his actions.

DENNIS LOHR

Recently, at Palmyra Church of the Brethren, the pastors decided to not sit at the head table for love feast. Instead, I sat beside an elderly gentleman. Thinking it would be too difficult for him to kneel down and wash my feet, I asked him if he wanted to wash my hands instead. He declined. So with an unsteady frame he made his way down to the floor. With shaky hands he washed and dried my feet, and with trembling determination he stood up to hug me, kiss me, and bless me. I was deeply moved by his unflinching act of love and respect. God was present to me in his actions.

What memories of feetwashing come to your mind?

The Brethren prefer the term "ordinance" to "sacrament" when it comes to things like baptism, love feast, and anointing. I like even better the phrase "means of grace." Participation in these rituals opens us to a unique experience of God's grace, both as givers and receivers.

Footwashing meditations are often based on the themes of humility and service. We are reminded to humble ourselves before others, taking on the role of the servant. We are challenged to go out into the world as servants. This is a teaching that has taken root in the Church of the Brethren and has been formative for our identity and practice.

In this way of thinking, the ordinances point us to a particular way of living, acting, and believing. But what if we flipped it around? Suppose, for instance, that we thought of an act of service itself as an ordinance or sacrament. Instead of footwashing being a time of reminding and challenging, what if it became a time of gathering and remembering and proclaiming God's presence in the things we have done? What if instead of our worship informing our living, that our living inspired our worship?

Saying it another way: Just as God was present to me in the actions of the gangly youth and the elderly gentleman, what if God becomes present to others in our actions toward them? Could it be that our actions, guided by the example and teaching of Jesus, become a "means of grace" in our world? Could it be also that our acts of service and humility become a "means of grace" for ourselves? Suppose the proper arena for practicing the sacraments is "not in the dark of buildings confining," but in the everyday living of our everyday lives. Suppose that when we practice "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" we are offering and experiencing God's grace.

Four years ago a children's Sunday school class painted a cabinet and started stocking it with food. They were guided by the simple idea that if someone came to us hungry, Jesus would want us to feed them. Today that project, known in Palmyra as The Caring Cupboard, is a "means of grace" for the multitude of churches, clubs, businesses, volunteers, and more than 600 clients who participate in its blessings. God was present in the actions of those teachers and children. Our community has been deeply moved and greatly inspired by their simple faith and act of concern.

What began with a few cans of food has become an amazing feast of love for so many of us—but in ways we never expected. Thanks be to God!

Just as God was present to me in the actions of the gangly youth and the elderly gentleman, what if God becomes present to others in our actions toward them? Could it be that our actions, guided by the example and teaching of Jesus, become a "means of grace" in our world?

Dennis Lohr is pastor of Christian nurture for Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

QUOTEWORTHY

"It's in crisis situations that leaders stand out."

—Julie Stratton, wife of Bluffton (Ohio) University chaplain David Stratton. She was commenting to ESPN on the response of surviving Bluffton baseball players after their charter bus crashed in Atlanta, killing five teammates and two others

"Jesus taught us . . . two things very, very clearly: unity and love."

—Miami Haitian pastor Ludovic St. Fleur, speaking at the opening worship of the spring Church of the Brethren General Board meetings

"Hungry people know no 'red states' or 'blue states,' no conservative churches or liberal churches."

—General Board Global Food Crisis Fund director Howard Royer, in an update on the fund's hunger relief initiatives

"There is a numbness that seems to have overcome America about the purpose, cost, and effects the Iraq war has had on our country's soul."

—National Council of Churches general secretary Bob Edgar, speaking on the fourth anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq

"Much has been promised to the continent, but not everything is finally delivered."

—Church World Service executive director/CEO the Rev. John L. McCullough, speaking at The Interfaith Summit on Africa

"I find it natural that for all of us, our faith, spirituality and action are deeply rooted in our respective churches. But I have always felt that our divisions are a flagrant denial of all that we believe, a scandal that is a result of human sin."

—the Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, new moderator of the World Council of Churches central committee

"Denominations that publish, and members who read, will write new chapters in the story of faith."

—Paul Schrag, writing in a *Mennonite Weekly Review* editorial about the financial turnaround of the Mennonite Publishing Network

"If you are not serious about worshiping God, then God is not going to do serious work through you."

—United Methodist Church Northern Illinois Conference bishop Hee-Soo Jung, speaking at a laity retreat. He was quoted in *The United Methodist Reporter*.

CULTUREVIEW

• Europe is the 2007 focus of the ecumenical **Decade to Overcome Violence** (DOV) initiative. The annual foci of preceding years were Palestine/Israel, Sudan, the United States, Asia, and Latin America. Nine key issues to be addressed by European churches and others during this year are human trafficking, youth, migration, militarization, domestic and interpersonal violence, human security, the environment, violence in the church, and a theology of a just peace.

• A survey conducted by the American Bible Society revealed that 67.7 percent of 12- to 18-year-olds believe **parents are the most important role models** in today's society. When choosing role models, the teens surveyed said the most important qualities they look for include honesty, integrity, loyalty, and truthfulness. After parents, 40.6 percent said teachers and coaches, followed by siblings (40.4 percent), religious leaders (18.7), athletes (18.3), and celebrities (16.5).

• The World Council of Churches (WCC) has endorsed a **groundbreaking climate change statement**, fruit of an unprecedented consensus among high-level representatives of the corporate world as well as civil, religious, and educational institutions. "The Path to Climate Sustainability" calls on governments to set scientifically informed targets for greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide emissions. Details are at http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/grocc.

• Opposition to the **war in Iraq** has grown mostly among Americans older than 50 and Democrats, according to CNN survey results released March 19. When President Bush announced March 19, 2003, that US-led forces had begun military attacks, 15 percent of Americans 50 and older strongly opposed the invasion, compared to 18 percent younger than 50. Four years later, the fighting is opposed by 52 percent of Americans 50 and older, and by 42 percent younger than 50. Just after the war began, 72 percent of Americans said they favored the war; today only 32 percent do.

JUST FOR FUN: RANKING

WHO'S THE BIGGEST? The *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, published each year by the National Council of Churches, ranks the 25 largest churches by membership. Can you correctly rank the following US churches from largest to smallest based on 2005 membership? Answers are printed below.

___ African Methodist Episcopal Church
___ American Baptist Churches in the USA
___ Assemblies of God
___ Episcopal Church
___ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
___ The Orthodox Church in America
___ Presbyterian Church (USA)
___ United Church of Christ
___ The United Methodist Church

ANSWERS (listed by overall ranking in the top 25 and reported 2005 membership): 3. The United Methodist Church, 8,075,010 members; 7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 4,850,776; 9. Presbyterian Church (USA), 3,098,842; 10. Assemblies of God, 2,830,861; 11. African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2,500,000; 15. Episcopal Church, 2,247,819; 20. American Baptist Churches in the USA, 1,396,700; 21. United Church of Christ, 1,224,297; 24. The Orthodox Church in America, 1,064,00. (In comparison, the Church of the Brethren reported about 129,000 members in 2005.)

Why volunteer?

PEOPLE OFFER DIVERSE REASONS FOR SHARING THEIR LIVES WITH OTHERS

by Todd Flory

In the ripe air of premature spring, amid a canopy of dangling Spanish moss peering down from the treetops like streamers championing their work and commitment, they gathered. They gathered on the welcome mat of familiar smiles and hugs to share stories, reconnect with friends, and relax.

Embracing a brief reprieve from their adopted worlds of chopping onions, repairing roofs, educating on social justice issues, reading bedtime stories to underprivileged children, and holding the cool, frail hands of the dying, this group of volunteers in Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) assembled for a mid-year retreat in February at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla.

In this age of consumerism and materialism, where vocational success is placed at a premium, where society often seems inoculated from simplicity and inebriated with image, where there is no military draft necessitating a need to perform alternative service, the question beckons: What's the incentive for someone to give a year or more to volunteer?

"It felt like a good opportunity and good timing to do so (volunteer)," said Leah Yingling, who is volunteering at Emmanuel Children's Home in Honduras. "After thinking about how the last 16 years of my life had been spent mostly furthering myself educationally, it was time for me to do something for others.

"I guess in the grand scheme of things, a year or two isn't that much time. Also, I think focusing this much time on a project lets you really get involved and make a difference; not that short-term service work doesn't allow you to do that, it just is on a deeper, wider scale."

In certain instances, people must perform some sort of voluntary work in accordance with their country's requirements. Lukas Palm, a BVS volunteer from Germany, is working in hospice care at

Rieke Flesch helps to stock a food pantry as part of her BVS volunteer time.

IN THIS AGE OF CONSUMERISM AND MATERIALISM, WHERE VOCATIONAL SUCCESS IS PLACED AT A PREMIUM, ...WHAT'S THE INCENTIVE FOR SOMEONE TO GIVE A YEAR OR MORE TO VOLUNTEER?

Comfort House in McAllen, Texas. Palm was not interested in joining the German army, and while he could have performed a term of civil service in his home country, he decided to embrace a new challenge where he could be of service directly with people.

"I wanted to have a new life," he said, "new adjustments, to experience something completely new."

Through her time in college, Paula Hoffert admits that she was mainly focused on personal goals. But she still sought to experience a different way of life, to explore simple living, working with low-income and minority children, and to live out a life of faith. She is getting that opportunity volunteering with Boys Hope Girls Hope in Kansas City.

"It was time to do something for other people," she said. "Before I moved on with life, the real world, I wanted to have a 'grounding' experience ... how I wanted to live my life spiritually."

■ ■ ■

From inside the modest dining hall on the Camp Ithiel grounds, volunteers—gazing up from sweeping the floor or washing dishes, tasks that for many were becoming habitual during their time in volunteer service—could entertain a peek through the window at the multimillion-dollar housing development being constructed just adjacent to the building.

The soon-to-be affluent neighborhood stood no more than a stone's-throw away, but in spirit the complex might as well have been as far away as the distance from many of the volunteers' hometowns. It not only stood in stark contrast to what many volunteers reside in and encounter during their time of service, but also represented the reflective dichotomy of the choice they had made to employ a volunteer lifestyle.

Once retired, Linda and Weldon Sikes knew they wanted to spend a significant amount of time traveling, but a series of events guided where and for what purpose. Before entering BVS, Linda had battled breast cancer, and Weldon underwent open-heart surgery. The decision was made to sell most of their possessions to make traveling long-term a more viable option.

Genelle Winn

"IT WAS TIME TO DO SOMETHING FOR OTHER PEOPLE," SHE SAID. "BEFORE I MOVED ON WITH LIFE, THE REAL WORLD, I WANTED TO HAVE A 'GROUNDING' EXPERIENCE ... HOW I WANTED TO LIVE MY LIFE SPIRITUALLY."

—BVS worker Paula Hoffert, shown helping to beautify a neighborhood by doing some work in the garden.

Shortly afterward, the Sikes began to learn more about volunteer options, which became more of a possibility as their availability and intrigue peaked.

"Our illnesses were integral in all of this," said Linda, who had wanted to join the Peace Corps when she was young. "We figured out how easy it is to become indigent—to lose everything."

"The more prayer we had, the more we realized we had no choice (but to serve)," added Weldon, who, along with his wife, is now working with homeless people at Meeting Ground in Elkton, Md.

"Now, I don't know if I ever want to do anything else than volunteer and work with the homeless," Linda concluded. "It saddens me to think of working in the 'real world.' "

Too often, volunteerism carries a stigma that it somehow is separate or apart from the real world. In cleaning up brush after a hurricane, serving a homeless person perhaps his or her only meal of the day, helping to bathe a mentally handicapped person, lobbying Congress for fair working wages, or any other number of activities, volunteers are learning to not turn their backs on unsightly parts

of the world. They are acknowledging that while they cannot choose what is "real," they still can choose what to see.

"I think it would be wrong to say that BVS is different than the real world, but in some ways it's more real than what passes for the real world," explained Jim Buckles, who volunteered through BVS at the Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs in Frederick, Md., in 1999. Directly out of high school then, he is now a program assistant at the World Council of Churches in New York.

"So much of what passes for a career these days is not the real world. It's making money for the car, etc.," he said. "Living in New York, I see that a lot. (Volunteering) gave me confidence to succeed in the real world. For people who choose BVS, that shows an initiative and courage that shows people they are equipped to succeed in the real world. They just choose not to pursue the most successful careers in worldly terms, the careers that the world would consider most successful."

Many volunteers use their year or two of volunteer service to discern what direction to go in the future, rather than immediately entering the job market or furthering their education.

"I have the chance to see a little bit more of the world and do a job I probably otherwise would never have the chance to do," said Yingling, who volunteered after graduating college. "It also gives me a sense of a little bit more freedom. I have the chance to be here and find where I fit and understand better what my strengths and weaknesses are rather than being hired for a job and being told exactly what I am going to do."

Buckles also felt serving for a year at the beginning of his young adult years was a great benefit.

"I wanted to do something more unexpected and different and that was the appeal—that the

Hannah Kliewer

Volunteering can provide a new perspective on the world literally, as well as figuratively. Here, BVS volunteer Bethany Walk joins others on a rooftop to assist with a tarring project.

Putting a 'personal face' on BVS

If for no other purpose, a Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) special assignment of visiting churches and pastors has proved valuable in placing a personal face on the program. For pastors, deacons, and youth groups in 154 congregations in eight districts, that personal face belonged to Sam Bowman, who in the fall of 2006 completed a year of traveling the country to talk about BVS.

Two other BVS workers also have been making visits to congregations: Carolyn Gong visited pastors in Middle Pennsylvania and Pacific Southwest, and Monica Rice has visited pastors in Northern Ohio and Southern Ohio.

During the visits, the volunteers' main objective was to ask what pastors knew about BVS, to provide additional information if asked, to listen to what the church leaders like or dislike about BVS, and to receive any suggestions of what they would like to see in BVS. A secondary purpose was to ask pastors their thoughts on the prospect of a military draft, and to find out what support churches will need in the event of a draft.

The volunteers also gave pastors conscientious objection packets from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Bowman said many pastors were unaware of the materials on conscientious objection.

Gong said the pastors she spoke to were very receptive and supportive of BVS, and that each congregation seemed like a family. She described the pastors as having "a deep love for Christ in what they're doing. That's their life work, their passion." It is that passion that Gong hopes will help push more people into choosing to do volunteer service.

"Sometimes people are hesitant to leave home," Gong said. "They go straight from school to the job, but that's our mainstream, our culture. I think any kind of volunteer service is vital to the country."—**Todd Flory**

church would provide something different for young people," he said. "Being in BVS caused me to seek out ministries where I could combine administrative work with being directly with the people I'm serving."

■ ■ ■

For many, a significant motivating factor to volunteer stems from a sense of moral or religious conviction or an attempt to live out one's faith in action. While faith has been an important part of her life for some time, Hoffert believed that aspect to be waning in recent years.

"I felt it was something I kind of neglected. It was something I wanted to recommit myself to," she said. "This experience has made me much more aware of issues (people) face—how hard it is for kids in poverty. It also has given me the opportunity to really live what I believe, and not just say what I believe."

For some, God played a very direct role in their decision.

"We needed to put God and family first, and we needed to simplify our lives," Linda Sikes said of their decision to volunteer at Meeting Ground, close to where she and Weldon have grandchildren. "It's changed everything. Things, possessions mean nothing. I like who I am better. I'm happier; I listen better. I'm doing what I always wanted to do."

Along their journey to a new home and a new lifestyle, the Sikes have found a new intimacy with and understanding of how God works in the world and in people's lives.

"What you have here is what you want," Weldon explained. "God is going to supply what you need. Once you realize that, you stop asking for what you want. We don't need to work to accumulate things. All we need is clothes to wear and a place to sleep, and God generally provides that. I've grown tremendously in faith, grown tremendously in ability to trust God and lean on Him."

For Palm, finding faith in himself and his abilities was a factor in the project he chose.

"If it's a difficult challenge, you try it," Palm said. "You don't say, 'Oh, it's not for me.' You try it and see if you can do it."

Through his yearning for challenge and desire to grow as an individual, Palm experienced the emergence of a deepening faith through his first few months working with the terminally ill.

"It's important that you were a part of something, that you helped, and without you it wouldn't be the same," he said. "When someone's dying and he tells you how important it is that you're here, that he's not so afraid anymore, that he can have fun and laugh, how meaningful it is to have you here during his last moments and days—that's really meaningful to me."

Likewise, at Boys Hope Girls Hope one of the young boys with whom Hoffert works was staying with his immediate family at his mother's house while recuperating from surgery when Hoffert stopped by for an unexpected visit on her day off.

"He was so happy that I came. I could tell it meant a lot to him. I think I should probably be doing that kind of stuff more often. It was such an easy thing to do, but it was so important to him and his mother," Hoffert recalled. "Service doesn't have to be something out of your way or difficult, but even the little things mean a lot."

■ ■ ■

As the last night of the volunteer retreat wore down, the shimmering glow of the cooling embers barely penetrated the perimeter of the campfire, giving way to the blanketing darkness and steadily dissipating conversations. A shadowy figure laboriously dragged a sizeable log behind him toward the dimming light. Without solicitation, another figure seized the other end of the log, and together they fed the hungry embers.

In the end, perhaps the more pertinent question to consider may not be *why* people volunteer, but *what kind* of people volunteer.

Todd Flory is a Brethren Volunteer Service worker currently serving as assistant to the director in the BVS office in Elgin, Ill. He is a member of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren.

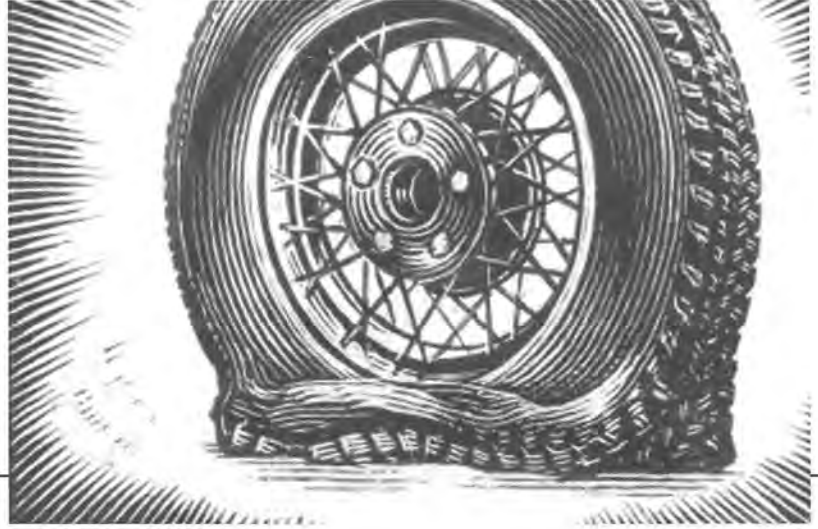
LEARN MORE

For more information about Brethren Volunteer Service, visit www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org or call 800-323-8039. Orientation units are held four times each year.

Opportunities for more short-term volunteer work include disaster relief projects (www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/DisasterResponse.htm), and summer youth, young adult, and intergenerational workcamps (www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps). Numerous local and district volunteering possibilities are also available. Check with your pastor or district office.

Genelle Wine

Trevor Myers, now serving with the Church of the Brethren Disaster Response program, lends a hand to a project at Jonah House in Baltimore.



MINISTRY WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

MEETING NEEDS IN AN URBAN SETTING IS RICH WITH REWARDS AND CHALLENGES

by Wes Richard

Two new, 12-inch tires catch my eye every time I enter the garage, remnants of a ministry project gone awry. They serve as a reminder that after 20 years there is still more I need to learn about helping others.

Our journey with Jim, Jane, and their 2-year-old began when they started attending church. They seemed to enjoy helping in the kitchen and participating in activities. We soon became aware that they were in desperate financial straits. Jim's work had been irregular, he was on medication, and Jane was pregnant. Before long they asked to meet with our deacons, to request help to pay their rent.

A church member observed that a tire on Jim's beat-up Geo was threadbare and wondered what could be done. A week later, the tire blew out, complicating their fragile economic circumstances. When I asked how they planned to repair it, Jim said the car had no jack, no wrench, and no spare. And without transportation he couldn't get to work.

I drove over to help. Under the junk behind the seat, Jim found a donut spare, but nothing else. Using my tools and lots of persuasion, together we made the switch.

Overwhelmed by all that was going wrong, Jim entrusted the tire to me. Since his job and his family's well-being were at stake, I decided to replace the tire. I soon learned that 12-inch tires are not plentiful. One dealer offered to sell his last three tires for $50. Since two other tires on the car

MINDFUL MINISTRY

Wes and Sue Richard have developed 10 key principles for doing urban ministry over the course of the many dozens of encounters they have had at their congregation in Lima, Ohio:

1. All applicants appreciate being taken seriously.
2. Some applicants know how to play the system.
3. Appearances can be deceiving.
4. It's not your fault.
5. The times are in your hands (Applicants often show up at inopportune times).
6. It is better to give than to lend.
7. Expressions of gratitude may be delayed.
8. The disadvantaged are often generous
9. Some applicants recognize spiritual need.
10. Issues can be resolved creatively.

The Richards have also developed narrative explanations and ministry hints for each of the principles. For more information, contact them at wrichard@nicsweb.com.

were badly worn, I bought them. The dealer mounted one, and I put the other two in our garage for later.

Then I learned that Jim had been driving under suspension. Fortunately, Jane was licensed. Unfortunately, she didn't know how to drive a stickshift. I gave her a few instructions in the church parking lot, and she became the designated driver.

Three weeks later, though, Jim was picked up again for driving under suspension. "They must know my car," he said. The police impounded the car, and soon the fees amounted to more than the car was worth. That is why I still have two 12-inch tires in my garage.

Meeting material needs has long been a service ministry of our small, inner-city congregation. It's not that we have a lot of resources; we simply can't turn a blind eye to the material needs around us. To meet those needs, we draw from our Love Fund, replenished by a year-end tithe of the church's general fund balance, and by designated contributions from individuals.

When we run low, it seems God always provides: like the Sunday one member handed me a check before church saying, "This is the Lord's money." I slipped it into my pocket without looking at it. During the service, a man we didn't know stood to say he and his family were passing through, but had run out of money since he had to use his cash to fix the brakes on his vehicle. Then a member of the congregation who was on a fixed income said that her van had given out, and she needed to replace it. I looked at the check in my pocket: $600. We were able to send the family on their way with food and gas and to help the member purchase a van the next week.

When people call to ask, "Are you the church that helps people?" we invite them to attend the Sunday worship service and to meet with the deacons and pastors afterwards to explain their need. That is our policy. Generally, we limit assistance to $100, and the check is made out to the landlord or utility company. We also keep a supply of used clothing and small household items. And, instead of keeping our own food pantry, the congregation budgets a monthly amount for the Salvation Army, which honors our requests for food.

Certain crisis requests get immediate attention. If someone needs gasoline to get to work, we meet them at a nearby station. We sometimes pay for a partial medical prescription and occasionally purchase diapers. We have even provided an occasional roll of toilet tissue from the church supply closet.

SOMETIMES THE MINISTRY OF MEETING MATERIAL NEEDS MAY LEAVE YOU FEELING LIKE YOU ARE SPINNING YOUR WHEELS, ESPECIALLY WHEN PROGRESS SEEMS SLOW. BUT DON'T GIVE UP. AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T BUY MORE TIRES THAN YOU NEED.

In our 22-year tenure as co-pastors, my wife and I have gained a great appreciation for this type of ministry, but it is not without its challenges. Many times we have prayed a special prayer for God's wisdom.

Sometimes the ministry of meeting material needs may leave you feeling like you are spinning your wheels, especially when progress seems slow. But don't give up. And whatever you do, don't buy more tires than you need.

Wes Richard and his wife, Sue, are co-pastors of Elm Street Church of the Brethren in Lima, Ohio.

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TAKING THE PULSE OF HEALTH CARE

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR INTRODUCES YOUTH TO COMPLEX ISSUE

by Walt Wiltschek

How many Americans lack adequate health insurance? What global benchmarks are set by the Millennium Development Goals? How are epidemic conditions in Africa being addressed?

Seventy-two senior high youth and advisors tackled these questions and others as the state of health care received a check-up at this year's Church of the Brethren Christian Citizenship Seminar (CCS). The event began March 24 in New York and concluded five days later in Washington, D.C., with an assortment of presentations, small-group discussions, a United Nations tour, worship, and sightseeing in between.

Many speakers focused on the merits of a "single-payer" health care system, which would eliminate the insurance companies as an intermediary in the process. Instead, standard rates would be negotiated by the government in each region, similar to what is done in Canada and in many nations in Europe and elsewhere. While funded publicly, care would still be delivered privately.

Each worker would pay a small percentage from his or her paycheck to fund the system, providing resources for those who can't afford health care on their own. Recent government estimates put the number of Americans without health insurance at about 46 million. Many companies are also being squeezed by the cost of health care coverage.

"The present system is sick and just doesn't get the job done," said Bill Davidson, a Church of the Brethren cardiologist from Lebanon, Pa. "Heath care is the next big social battle that's going to take place, and you as young people have a front-row seat."

Davidson, who has become a strong advocate for universal health care despite some opposition from within the medical community, said that the huge profits currently being reaped by insurance and pharmaceutical companies could easily be redirected to provide health care for all Americans. He noted that the World Health Organization currently ranks the US No. 37 in overall health care worldwide.

He said he was doing his advocacy work "as part of my Christian witness," and posed the question, "What would Jesus think of our medical system?"

Marilyn Clement, national coordinator of Healthcare - NOW, focused on House Resolution 676, which proposes a United States National Health Insurance Act, guaranteeing universal access to high-quality and cost-effective health care. Clement's organization is leading a petition drive for the bill to be passed.

"Getting there is going to be hard," said Clement, who noted that health care costs could top 20 percent of the gross national product (GNP) by 2020 under the current system. "It's not going to be easy."

Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren pastor Wally Landes observed in an opening session that Brethren have often not chosen the easy road in a quest for mutuality.

"Issues of health and wholeness are in our bones as

Walt Wiltschek

Lauren Young, left, of Harrisonburg, Va., poses a question to a speaker at Christian Citizenship Seminar while Sahara Dunham of Bakersfield, Calif., looks on.

ABOUT CCS

Christian Citizenship Seminar is sponsored annually except in National Youth Conference years by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministries office and Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Watch for details at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/CCS.htm.

Walt Wiltschek

"I WANT YOU TO GO BACK WHEREVER YOU CAME FROM AND BEGIN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE," ARCHBOLD SAID. **"YOU CAN DO THOSE KINDS OF THINGS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HURT AND WHO ARE NEEDY."**

Phill Carlos Archbold, pastor of Brooklyn (N.Y.) First Church of the Brethren, tells Christian Citizenship Seminar participants about his personal journey as a minister to AIDS patients.

Brethren," Landes told the group. "I think God's will is for wholeness, and sometimes stuff gets in the way."

In the face of challenges, "Brethren know how to huddle," Landes said. "Brethren learn to stick together." He recounted the history of Brethren retirement homes, the health component of early overseas mission work, mutual aid and insurance, and other denominational health initiatives.

He emphasized that health is a theological and spiritual issue, that Brethren "have always taken health and healing seriously," and the ability of Brethren to do big things despite their relatively small size. Often, he added, some have made sacrifices to bring about justice for the larger community.

One day of the seminar focused on the more specific health issue of AIDS, which is still running rampant, especially in Africa. Church World Service (CWS) policy analyst Kathleen McNeely outlined the work being done in Africa through the CWS Africa Initiative, addressing issues of water, hunger, and poverty in addition to HIV/AIDS.

"Africa has got to be given a chance," she said. On the Millennium Development Goals, many of which concern Africa, she noted that we are about halfway to the target date of 2015, "and we're not doing so hot." Delegates at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference endorsed those goals last summer.

McNeely urged passage of the Africa Health Capacity Investment Act of 2007 in the US Senate, which would aid African countries in establishing a stable health care infrastructure.

In the evening after McNeely spoke, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Church of the Brethren pastor Phill Carlos Archbold related his personal story of caring for AIDS patients, using photos to show the devastation the disease brings. "I want you to go back wherever you came from and begin to make a difference," Archbold said. "You can do those kinds of things for people who are hurt and who are needy."

Youth later in the week lobbied their representatives in Washington on the Senate and House bills they had learned about, following a session on advocacy by Greg Howe, who grew up in York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. Howe, now a senior policy manager on health care reform issues under Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, described his call to advocacy work and offered pointers. He said that while many states are working at the issue, "we need a federal solution."

While the youth still clearly had some questions at the end of the week, it was also evident that the issue—and the larger concern of advocating for justice as part of one's Christian witness—had struck a chord with many of them.

"It's amazing how many different programs we can get involved with," said Alex Otake of Lombard, Ill. "There's no excuse for us not to do anything. It's just a matter of choosing."

Patty Himes of La Verne, Calif., expressed a similar view: "I learned that no matter how small my voice may be, as long as they come together, it's much louder. If you say what you believe and you say it loud, you'll make a difference."

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER and attended this year's Christian Citizenship Seminar.

LEARN MORE

- Annual Conference passed a **Statement on Health Care in the United States** in 1989 (www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/89HealthCare.htm), updated with a Resolution on Health Care in the United States in 1992.
- The **Millennium Development Goals** can be found at www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.
- A **background piece on the single-payer health system** presented at CCS by Davidson is available at www.pnhp.org/multimedia/animation_what_is_singlepayer.php.
- A study guide titled ***Your Health and the Environment***, by Shantilal Bhagat, is available from Brethren Press. Details are at www.brethren.org/genbd/health/health.htm.
- The ongoing need for **health kits**, distributed through the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., was mentioned several times during CCS. Details are at www.churchworldservice.org/kits/health-kits.html.

Lights are bright for 'Christian Broadway'

by David N. Dunkle

SIGHT & SOUND THEATRES ARE BIG BUSINESS IN AMISH COUNTRY

Few signs beckon pilgrims seeking the Millennium Theatre. They know the way, or at least their bus drivers do.

"Our audience doesn't have any trouble finding us," public relations manager Pamela Evans said, explaining the paucity of billboards along the Lancaster County, Pa., roads leading to the 2,000-seat Millennium and its older sister, the 700-seat Living Waters Theatre.

By year's end, more than 800,000 people will have paid to see one of the several shows staged by Sight & Sound Theatres, the for-profit corporation that operates the two venues. That annual total makes Sight & Sound the nation's largest faith-based theater, as well as tourist-rich Lancaster County's No. 1 ticketed attraction.

Many visitors pay $250 or more for an overnight bus trip that also buys them a motel bed, a Pennsylvania Dutch buffet, outlet shopping, and a visit to another of Amish country's attractions.

These people are part of a trend in the travel industry. Industry insiders call it affinity-based tourism, or less formally, "togethering." Faith-based travel is the fastest-growing segment in the "togethering" marketplace. Millions of the faithful, Protestant and Roman Catholic, pool their recreational clout to demand cruises, theme parks, and live shows that reflect their values.

Sight & Sound, already a seasoned player, is well-positioned for the evolving market. Founders and owners Glenn and Shirley Eshelman—both former members of the Church of the Brethren—have seen their vision of Christian entertainment mushroom since they first offered slide shows set to music 30 years ago. In 2008, Sight & Sound will open another theater in Branson, Mo., a tourism center with demographics similar to Lancaster County.

"I really saw the potential this had for ministry purposes," said Glenn Eshelman, who grew up on a Lancaster County dairy farm and now lives in Strasburg. "We get so many people here (that) you could not get to walk through a church door."

Glenn Eshelman said he's the dreamer, his wife the realist.

"I'm the throttle, and she's the brake," he said. "You need the throttle to keep moving ahead, and you need the brake to keep you from going over the cliff."

The Eshelmans believe theater is a natural way to spread the gospel, pointing out that Christ was a storyteller who often used props to illuminate his message.

"If it worked for Jesus, it can work for us," Glenn Eshelman said.

The Millennium, which opened in 1998 after an accidental fire destroyed the previous theater on the site, is dedicated to a Christian message. A lamb-and-lion sculpture greets visitors outside the entrance doors. Broad hallways with statues of angels in wall niches lead the way to rest rooms, concession stands, and the arenalike auditorium.

"We sow the seed at Sight & Sound," Glenn Eshelman said. "The seed is the Word of God, it's the gospel. We want the best here."

Sight & Sound provides that quality, although it is not a place for those who like their theater edgy. Despite first-rate production values, the shows are faithful retellings of well-known Bible stories. There is no profanity or sex in these displays.

"Not everyone who comes is the stereotype of a devout Christian," Evans said. "But we do express in each show what the Bible says. Every show is going to present the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Evans said more than 90 percent of Sight & Sound's visitors come back.

"It's a great group travel destination," said Jeff Gayduk, publisher of *Leisure Group Travel*, a magazine for industry insiders. Gayduk's subscribers recently chose Sight & Sound as their favorite theater destination in the United States.

Nearly everything seen on a Sight & Sound stage is created in-house, including the animatronic animals used when real ones are impractical (lions) or impossible (dinosaurs).

Backstage is a maze of rooms that includes dressing rooms, holding pens, the costume department and the set-design shops. Behind the theater are the barns and outbuildings where Sight & Sound's animal husbandry department is headquartered. Trainers prepare the 100 resident horses, dogs, camels, sheep, goats, and alpacas for stage work. That's where you'll find Scooter, an 1,800-pound camel, and Windsong, a 17-year-old Arabian mare.

The privately held company rotates its shows and regularly works in new ones. The ability to restage productions helps to keep Sight & Sound profitable, because budgets for new productions can run into the millions.

"Miracle of Christmas" is staged each holiday season. Other shows include the Easter favorite "Behold the Lamb" and 2003's "Daniel," which featured animatronic lions and a geyser of fire.

The newest is the $5 million "In the Beginning," written to tell the biblical story of creation, which opened in March. Evans said 30 percent of the tickets for the seven-month run already had been sold by the beginning of 2007.

David N. Dunkle writes for *The Patriot-News* in Harrisburg, Pa. This article was distributed by Religion News Service.

DID YOU KNOW?

As part of the denomination's 300th anniversary celebrations, Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania districts are planning a joint anniversary launch event at Sight & Sound Theatres in Strasburg on Sept. 23. Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, is scheduled as the keynote speaker.

For more information on Sight & Sound Theatres, visit www.sight-sound.com.

A BRETHREN CONNECTION

Glenn and Shirley Eshelman's journey to running the nation's top faith-based theater began in the Church of the Brethren congregations of Lancaster County, Pa.

Glenn grew up in West Green Tree Church of the Brethren, eventually becoming part of the Florin congregation when that meetinghouse organized independently. Shirley grew up in the White Oak congregation and moved to Florin when she and Glenn were married.

Shirley says Glenn was long interested in art (and was reprimanded by his father for doodling in church when he was young), and eventually took up photography to aid his painting. One month, Florin asked Glenn to show some slides from his travels for a family night at the church. He was afraid that might be boring, Shirley says, so they put music and narration to the showing.

'We really feel that was the beginning of it all," Shirley says. "Neither of us ever planned it. It's just one step at a time, and God leads all the way."

They later transferred to the Middle Creek congregation, where Glenn served for 14 years as part of the plural ministry team. They began to travel widely with the increasingly complex performances, until Glenn grew tired of traveling and said, "Let's do something here at home." They began by renting an auditorium at Lancaster Bible College in 1975, then built their own theater.

When they moved to Strasburg as their business took off, they began attending a nearby independent church. Still, they value their Brethren roots.

"We're very grateful for our Christian heritage, and the teaching we received as children growing up in the Church of the Brethren," Shirley says. "It really all did begin back with the Church of the Brethren asking us to do a slide show!"—**Walt Wiltschek**

Hosea: *Unrequited love*

A marriage metaphor demonstrates Israel's disloyalty

by Graydon F. Snyder

The words of the prophet Hosea are painfully beautiful. God loved Israel beyond human comprehension. Israel was the Lord's beloved child. God taught the child Israel how to walk; held him when he was sick; fed him when he could not swallow:

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that
I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them
(11:3-4).

Despite this compassionate love, Israel still turned away from the Lord by worshiping other gods and giving allegiance to other nations. God's heart was broken:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm
and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath (11:8-9).

Hosea describes Israel's disloyalty as harlotry (9:1). It was common then to speak of national or divine infidelity as prostitution—as, for example, the unfaithfulness of the people of Tyre to their own nation (Isa. 23:17-18). In the New Testament Paul spoke of Christians who violated their covenant with Christ as people who frequented prostitutes (1 Cor. 5:12-20). In the book of Revelation John the Seer referred to Rome, a city oblivious to the rule of the real God, as the whore of Babylon (Rev. 17:15). In other words, loose women have been a constant symbol for disloyal corporate allegiance.

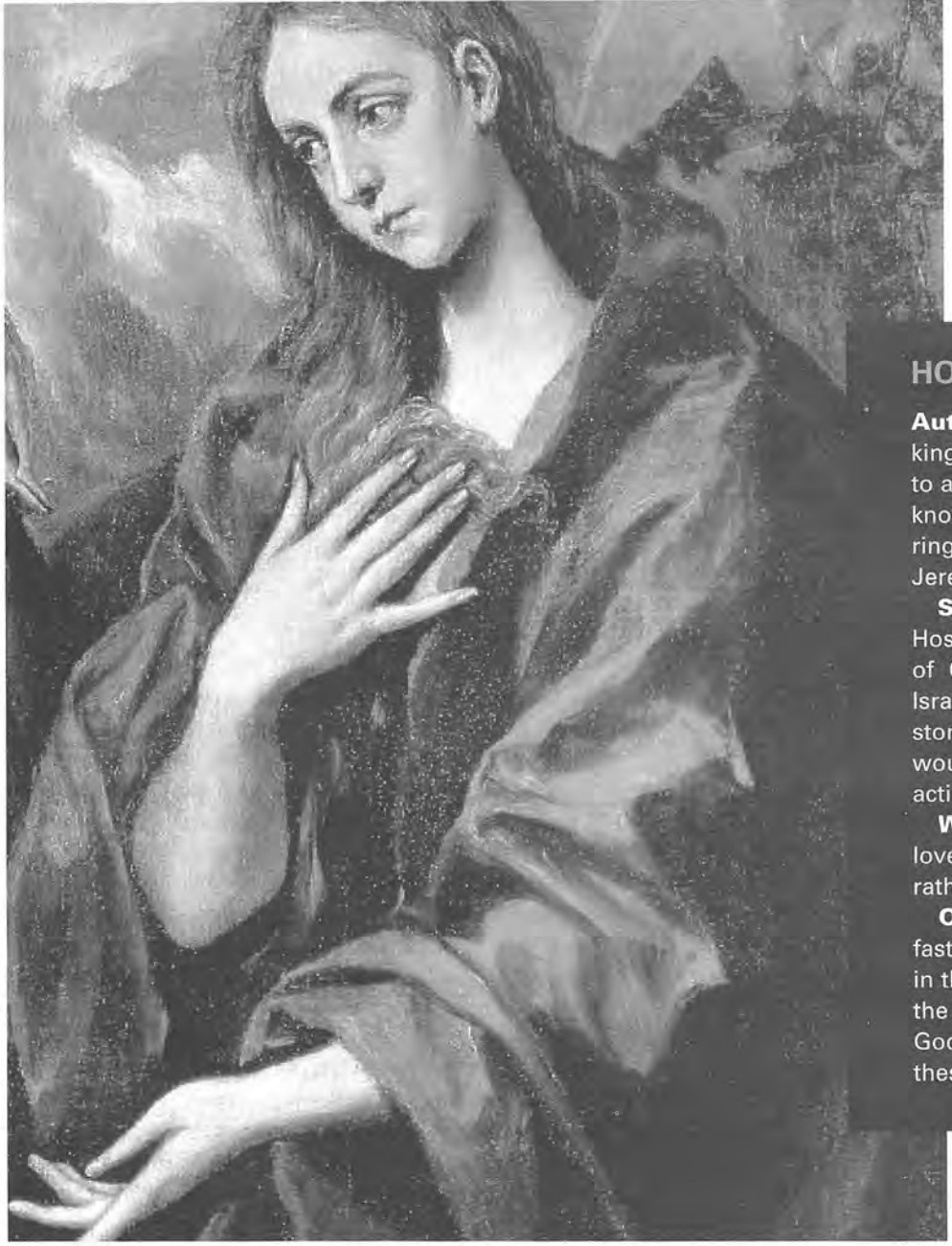
It comes as a shock then when, in the introduction to the book (ch. 1-3), the Lord asks Hosea to marry the prostitute Gomer (just as God had married the harlot Israel).

Hosea married her, and they had three symbolic children: Jezreel ("God sows"), a name that refers to the impending doom for Israel in the valley of Jezreel (2 Kings 9:17-26); then "Not Pitied," because Israel had passed over the opportunity for forgiveness; and, finally, more seriously, "Not My People," a name that denied the Israelites were any longer the people of God (for in Deut. 6:7 God had made a promise: "I will take you for my people").

The words and actions of Hosea apparently did have an effect, because the Israelites no longer worshiped Baal, god of the Canaanites (2:16-17): "On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Baal (Canaanite word for Master).' " But they could not remain loyal, so for a second time God called on Hosea to marry a harlot (3:1-5).

As with all the biblical writers, Hosea understands the relationship of Israel to the Lord as one of a covenant with the chosen people (Deut. 5:2). In a covenant, both parties share a caring love and at the same time have mutual obligations. On the human level, when that relationship exists between equals then marriage makes the best analogy. When the bond exists between a leader and a subordinate, then parent and child or ruler and subject make the better analogy. The leader promises protection and growth for the subjects, while they, in turn, give honor and obedience to the leader.

Most biblical writers use the leader-subject analogy in reference to God. The beauty and agony of Hosea is that he uses primarily the very human husband-wife analogy. Many of his analogies of unfaithfulness come from the marriage home: "They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven" (7:4); or "Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned" (7:8); or "Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?"



HOSEA: A CLOSER LOOK

Author: Hosea was a prophet in the northern kingdom from the middle of the eighth century to about 721 BCE. His book is one of the best known of the so-called "minor prophets" (referring to a collection smaller than Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel).

Stories: Chapters 1-3 tell of God asking Hosea to marry a prostitute, Gomer, as a symbol of God's covenant with the unfaithful harlot Israel. Many later readers suppose it is only a story, not an actual event. They doubt that God would have asked anyone to do an immoral action (Luther, *Prefaces*).

Well-known verse: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (6:6).

Other notes: Hosea's use of the term "steadfast love" (*chesed* in Hebrew) surely expresses in the Hebrew Scriptures the *agape* (Greek) of the New Testament, as in "Love the Lord your God with all your heart," or "the greatest of these is love."

"I WILL MAKE FOR YOU A COVENANT ON THAT DAY . . . AND I WILL ABOLISH THE BOW, THE SWORD, AND WAR FROM THE LAND; AND I WILL MAKE YOU LIE DOWN IN SAFETY. AND I WILL TAKE YOU FOR MY WIFE FOREVER; I WILL TAKE YOU FOR MY WIFE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND IN JUSTICE, IN STEADFAST LOVE, AND IN MERCY." (HOSEA 2:18-19)

Israel's violation of the family covenant appears primarily in going after Baal and even trusting those nations that worshiped Baal (9:6). The marriage of Hosea to Gomer demonstrated that idolatry for all Israel to see.

Hosea offered an explanation: Israel had forgotten the Lord; there was no knowledge of God in the land (4:1, 6; 5:4). Consequently they could not worship the true God. So the message of Hosea come down to two hopes:

For I desire steadfast love
and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather
than burnt offerings (6:6).

Hosea does indeed wish for the Israelites to be loyal to God, but even more he hopes the sacrificial system will cease. The Israelites will then know the covenant love of God, their divine husband.

Graydon F. Snyder is a member of Chicago First Church of the Brethren and a former professor at Bethany Theological Seminary.

MESSENGER's "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in June: Joel, by David Leiter.

General Board considers mission, love, and unity

The agenda for the Church of the Brethren General Board meetings March 9-12 in Elgin, Ill., focused on mission, with reports from Church of the Brethren mission work in Brazil and Haiti. It also included an interim report from the committee studying ministry options at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., among other business.

Special events included an initial report of a new sociological study of Brethren, a report from Annual Conference moderator Belita Mitchell about her just-completed trip to Nigeria, and a presentation by Martha Grace Reese, author of *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*—a study of mainline Protestant congregations that have been successful in practicing evangelism.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

General Board members were invited to reflect artistically on the theme of their March meeting, "Continuing the Mission," through playful media such as markers, paint, glitter, and Play-Doh. Here, board member Angie Lahman Yoder creates a display using the theme words.

Mission in Brazil

Marcos and Suely Inhauser, mission coordinators in Brazil and leaders of Igreja da Irmandade (Church of the Brethren in Brazil), reported both progress and disappointments in the new church's experience over its first six years. "It is a hard task for me to be here today," Marcos Inhauser said as he spoke of his deep discouragement over setbacks in the last year.

The board authorized the start of the mission in March 2001. Weeks later, the church had already held its inaugural worship service, and in a few more weeks some 150 people were worshiping. Over the next couple of years the Inhausers helped the church call pastoral leadership, place a dozen people in theological training, and plant five congregations.

"Excitement does not equal commitment," Inhauser said as he listed some "tough lessons learned." Brethren are faced with cultural pressures and opposition because they are "doing a different style of church than Brazilians are used to," he said, which has led to internal tensions among leaders, many of whom have left the church. Other setbacks are the closing of two congregations and declines in attendance in others, as well as financial difficulties.

"Even when we have problems, God supports us," Marcos Inhauser told the board, adding that he can see signs of hope. Board members and others responded by gathering around the Inhausers with laying on of hands and prayer.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

The General Board prayed, and held a laying on of hands, for Brazil mission coordinators Marcos and Suely Inhauser, and Haiti mission coordinator Ludovic St. Fleur.

Mission in Haiti

Ludovic St. Fleur, coordinator of the Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti and pastor of Eglise des Freres Haitiens in Miami and Orlando (Fla.) Haitian Fellowship, reported as well. "In Haiti there is both bad and good news," he said.

In 2003 St. Fleur was called to return to Haiti to begin the Church of the Brethren mission. Over four years, a congregation and two preaching points have been started. The church has baptized more than 35 people. However, kidnappings are also terrorizing Haiti, where church attendance has declined and a children's ministry has been affected because people fear leaving their homes. The children's ministry has fallen to an attendance of some 75, from a high of around 125, St. Fleur said. Other challenges include the need to move the church building because it is in an area designated for development by the government.

But the church is continuing in faith and continuing to meet.

"We need your prayers for how God can open doors for the Church of the Brethren in Haiti," St. Fleur said. He added a request for prayer for his congregation in Miami, which has been a chief financial supporter of the mission.

Brethren Service Center

"We believe the Brethren Service Center should be continued, strengthened, and undergirded with new vision," said the Brethren Service Center Ministry

Options Exploration Committee, in an interim report presented by chair Dale Minnich. They noted the center's key mission, to "meet human need," remains "urgently relevant." Two General Board ministries located there—the New Windsor Conference Center and Service Ministries—face some management challenges, he said, but added that "we believe all ministries at the Brethren Service Center can be financially viable for the foreseeable future."

The committee will bring a working draft of a final report to the General Board on June 30 at its pre-Annual Conference meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. Following that, the committee plans a "season of welcomed comments and questions," including hearings in New Windsor and elsewhere. The report will come to the board for action in October.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Haiti mission coordinator Ludovic St. Fleur led opening worship for the General Board's meetings. His sermon called the board to love and unity.

In other business

The board heard about work in progress to update the "Ethics in Ministry Relations" document of 1996 and received reports from the executive committee's trip to the Gulf Coast, the Global Food Crisis Fund, a Faith Expedition to Vietnam, and financial reports, among others.

The board also approved the agency's annual report, spent time in small-group discussion of the challenges of new information and communication technologies, and heard commendations for retiring employees. An offering received more than $1,500 for the Ministry Assistance Fund, which assists ministers in crisis.

The executive committee confirmed Stephen L. Longenecker, chair of history and political science at Bridgewater (Va.) College, to a four-year term on the Brethren Historical Committee.

St. Fleur and the Inhausers led opening and closing worship, respectively. Board chair Jeff Neuman-Lee led Sunday morning worship, speaking on Jesus' Palm Sunday ride into Jerusalem. "When you go with trust in God, and love for others, there will be a resurrection," he said.

The board invited its members and staff to join in a prayer covenant at the close of the meetings. The covenant urges daily prayer for programs and ministries of Annual Conference and the Brethren agencies. Participants also covenant to pray weekly with a prayer partner.

Neuman-Lee and Shumate head 2007 Annual Conference ballot

Current General Board chair Jeff Neuman-Lee and Virlina District executive minister David K. Shumate head this year's Annual Conference ballot as candidates for moderator-elect.

The Nominating Committee of Standing Committee—a committee of district representatives—develops the list of candidates, and Standing Committee then votes to create the ballot. The full ballot that will be presented to the 2007 Annual Conference, June 30-July 4 in Cleveland, Ohio, is as follows:

Annual Conference moderator-elect: Jeff Neuman-Lee of Denver, Colo.; David K. Shumate of Roanoke, Va.

Annual Conference secretary: Fred W. Swartz of Bridgewater, Va.; Diane (Newcomer) Mason of Moulton, Iowa.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: R. Jan Thompson of Mesa, Ariz.; Sarah B. Steele of Martinsburg, Pa.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee: Peter C. Kaltenbaugh Jr. of Frieden, Pa.; Lucinda Barnum-Steggerda of Crown Point, Ind.

Committee on Interchurch Relations: James O. Eikenberry of Stockton, Calif.; Melissa Bennett of Fort Wayne, Ind.

Association of Brethren Caregivers board: J. Colleen Michael of Wenatchee, Wash.; John Katonah of Evanston, Ill.

Bethany Theological Seminary trustee, *representing colleges:* Carol A. Scheppard of Mount Crawford, Va.; Celia Cook-Huffman of Huntingdon, Pa. *Representing clergy:* Lisa L. Hazen of Wichita, Kan.; William A. Waugh of Greensburg, Pa.

Brethren Benefit Trust board: Deborah E. Romary of Fort Wayne, Ind.; Willie Hisey Pierson of Plainfield, Ill.

General Board, at-large: Laura Guthrie of Chandler, Ariz.; Terrell Lewis of Washington, D.C.

On Earth Peace board: Susan Chapman of Fincastle, Va.; Linda K. Williams of San Diego, Calif.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1-31 National Older Adult Month

May 4-5 Ministry of Reconciliation workshop: "Christian Mediation and Conciliation, Part 1," South Bend, Ind.

May 6 National Youth Sunday

May 7-10 Consultation on Ministerial Leadership, Elgin, Ill.

May 11-12 Ministry of Reconciliation workshop: "Christian Mediation and Conciliation, Part 2," South Bend, Ind.

May 20 Health Promotion Sunday

May 26-28 Young Adult Conference, Camp Harmony, Hooversville, Pa.

June 1-2 Puerto Rico Island Assembly

June 2-7 Ministry Summer Service orientation, Elgin, Ill.

June 9 Denominational Deacon Training Event, The Cedars, McPherson, Kan.

June 15-17 National Junior High Conference, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

June 24-30 Song & Story Fest, Inspiration Hills, Burbank, Ohio

June 29-30 Church of the Brethren Ministers Association conference, Cleveland, Ohio

June 30 Church of the Brethren General Board meeting, Cleveland, Ohio

June 30-July 4 Annual Conference, Cleveland, Ohio

Executive committee visits **Gulf Coast disaster sites**

The General Board's executive committee and three staff members visited projects related to Emergency Response ministries in the Gulf Coast region on Feb. 15-17.

In New Orleans, the group visited a Disaster Child Care (DCC) project at FEMA's Welcome Home Center. The center provides citizens with access to many types of storm-related aid in one location. While parents complete paperwork, apply for loans, or receive counseling, their children can safely play under the care of DCC volunteers.

The group also traveled through the Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans, where the flood following Hurricane Katrina left few buildings standing. Of those left, many had floated off their foundations and settled askew. Several brick churches remained, but doors and windows were chained shut. One pastor had spray painted his cell phone number on the building so that his congregants could reach him. There were few signs of recovery.

The tour continued in Pearl River, La., where a modular home will soon be placed on its foundation by Brethren Disaster Response. In earlier planning, following the widespread destruction of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, staff had hoped to be able to expand the Brethren Disaster Response program by building modular homes in other parts of the country and then transporting them to the Gulf. But strict building codes and other legalities rendered that concept unworkable at this time, the executive committee learned.

Ken Wenger

The lighting of a candle was part of the dedication of Gloria Bradley's home, rebuilt in Lucedale, Miss., by Brethren Disaster Response volunteers in cooperation with numerous ecumenical volunteers.

That evening, the group fellowshiped with Brethren Disaster Response volunteers before spending the night in FEMA trailers. "For one night, it was adequate, but for a long-term location for a family, it just wouldn't cut it," reflected executive committee member Angela Lahman Yoder. "The rebuilding projects have to go faster so that people can get back into their homes and start to live again," she said.

In Chalmette, La., the church leaders gained a glimpse into another Brethren Disaster Response rebuilding project. Currently, a team of volunteers is rebuilding the home of Ron Richardson in St. Bernard Parish, where 27,000 homes were destroyed.

Before the storm, St. Bernard Parish had a population of 66,000; only 6,000 to 12,000 people have returned. "It's shocking because these are people who had 'done it right,' " said Liz McCartney, co-founder of the St. Bernard Project, a partner organization. "They worked hard, they owned their homes, and many had insurance. Fifty percent of the population was retired. The median household income was $30,000 before the storm, and the crime rate was low."

Later in the same day, the group celebrated hope and recovery at a house dedication in Lucedale, Miss. Brethren volunteers, in cooperation with numerous ecumenical volunteers, completed a house for Gloria Bradley, who had survived not only the loss of a house but also two heart attacks and as many strokes.

On the final day of the trip, participants traveled to Florida to visit with staff from Rebuild Northwest Florida, the long-term recovery committee in the Pensacola area.

"The destruction is just so widespread," said Dale Minnich, who volunteered with the response project in Chalmette for a few days prior to the executive committee visit. "It makes me think about how this compares to something like the devastation after World War II in Europe. It seems like to reclaim this area, a huge response is required."

Members of the executive committee included Yoder, Minnich, General Board chair Jeff Neuman-Lee, vice-chair Timothy P. Harvey, Vickie Whitacre Samland, and Ken Wenger; staff members included Emergency Response director Roy Winter and associate director Zach Wolgemuth, and Becky Ullom, director of Identity and Relations.—

Becky Ullom

Ken Wenger

The General Board's Executive Committee worked on a home in St. Bernard Parish alongside Brethren Disaster Response volunteers. Posing with the group is homeowner Ron Richardson.

Poverty, evangelism highlight launch of CCT movement

A consensus on the importance of evangelism and the need to eliminate domestic poverty marked the official formation of Christian Churches Together (CCT), at a meeting in Pasadena, Calif., Feb. 6-9. This was the sixth annual gathering for CCT, an informally structured organization of 36 churches and national Christian groups that began in 2001 to provide a meeting place all the major groupings of Christian traditions in the US.

A proposal for the Church of the Brethren to join CCT will be brought to this year's Annual Conference by the Committee on Interchurch Relations and the General Board. Four Church of the Brethren leaders attended as observers among the approximately 150 participants: Belita Mitchell, moderator of Annual Conference; Jim Beckwith, moderator-elect; Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board; and Michael Hostetter, chair of the Committee on Interchurch Relations.

CCT was begun when a number of US church leaders discussed the need for an ecumenical gathering that included Christian churches and traditions that were not members of the National Council of Churches (NCC) nor the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The idea was encouraged by NCC general secretary Bob Edgar. By March 2006, 36 churches and organizations had become founding members.

With a focus on praying together and building relationships, the new organization has become the broadest and most inclusive fellowship of Christian churches and traditions in the US. The five "faith families" of the CCT are Evangelical/Pentecostal, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Racial/Ethnic. It is the first time Roman Catholics have formally participated in a broad national ecumenical coalition in the US. Participants also include a number of nondenominational religious groups such as World Vision, Bread for the World, Sojourners/Call to Renewal, and Evangelicals for Social Action.

"We have said from the beginning that our purpose is to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world," said the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson of the Reformed Church in America, chair of the CCT steering committee. "In Pasadena we all experienced how this is truly happening, and this fills us with joy for the future."

Evangelism and the need to eliminate poverty in the US were major topics of discussion at the meeting. The theme, "Is Jesus' Proclamation Our Proclamation?" from Luke 4:18, led participants' discussion of evangelism in their church and faith family contexts. Participants also continued discussions from a 2006 gathering on poverty, when a committee was appointed to find common ground and propose ways to challenge US Christians and the country to address poverty. At this meeting, CCT considered the proposals and approved a statement on poverty.

For more information, see www.christianchurchestogether.org.

BVS Unit 273: Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 273 held its orientation Jan. 29-Feb. 16 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla. Participants, their hometowns or home congregations, and project assignment are: (front, from left) Mark Holbert of Saugatuck, Mich., to Oakland (Calif.) Catholic Worker House; Martin Anderson of Eisenhuettenstadt, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Joel Dillon of Wheaton, Ill., to L'Arche Community, Tecklenburg, Germany; (middle row) Laurin Wuennenberg of Twistringen, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Hannah Kliewer (orientation staff), Juergen Bartel of Rheinfelden, Germany, to Gould Farm, Monterey, Mass.; (back row) Genelle Wine (orientation staff); Katherine Nichols of Emporia, Kan., to Camp Harmony, Hooversville, Pa.; Marissa Buckles of New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, to Tri-City Homeless Coalition, Fremont, Calif.; Bethany Walk of State College, Pa., to Quaker Cottage, Belfast, Northern Ireland. For more about Brethren Volunteer Service visit www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org.

Church of the Brethren launches webcast series

Webcasts—sometimes called "podcasts"—are now being offered through a joint project of Annual Conference and the Association of Brethren Caregivers, Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, the Church of the Brethren Credit Union, the General Board, and On Earth Peace.

The initiative came from Bethany, which is hosting webcasts at www.cobwebcast.bethanyseminary.edu, with impetus from Enten Eller, director of distributed education and electronic communication. Every two weeks, coinciding with each issue of the Church of the Brethren Newsline (go to http://listserver.emountain.net/mailman/listinfo/newsline), new audio webcasts will be offered featuring information from one of the agencies or Annual Conference.

Webcasts may be listened to online at the website, or they may be downloaded and played on an MP3 player or iPod. Free subscriptions (through an RSS feed) are also offered. Newsline will include announcements of the topics of webcasts as they become available.

The inaugural webcast told the story of how Brethren Benefit Trust-owned shares helped launch a landmark move by insurance company Aflac, the first US corporation to give shareholders a nonbinding vote on executive compensation information. The General Board's first webcast featured voices from the Gulf Coast, reviewing a visit by the board's executive committee to Brethren Disaster Response rebuilding sites and the Disaster Child Care project in New Orleans.

Credit union offers savings options for kids, youth, adults

The Church of the Brethren Credit Union has begun offering new savings options to facilitate good stewardship practices among church members. The new products include regular money market accounts, Traditional IRA and Roth IRA money market accounts, Coverdell Education money market accounts, and five club savings accounts. The credit union is affiliated with Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT).

Two of the new savings accounts, the Kids Club and the Youth Club, are designed especially for children. The Kids Club is available to any child through the age of 12; the Youth Club from ages 13-18. New Christmas Club and Vacation Club savings accounts are designed to encourage members to plan ahead and save towards specific goals, and avoid excessive credit card debt and the risk of late payment fees and high interest rates.

The Brethren Youth Mission Club is truly unique to the Church of the Brethren, according to the credit union. It is offered to encourage savings for Brethren service or educational opportunities such as National Youth Conference, Christian Citizenship Seminar, workcamps, or local projects. The Brethren Youth Mission Club is available to any individual, youth group, Sunday school class, congregation, or district. For details, contact the credit union at 800-746-1505.

Personnel moves

Susan Brandenbusch, administrative assistant to the president of Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) since November 1999, had her position terminated effective June 15 and no longer had regular office hours as of March 15. In addition to being assistant to the president, Brandenbusch was in charge of payroll operations, and organized board meetings and the BBT Fitness Challenge at Annual Conference.

Donna March, manager of insurance operations for BBT, has been appointed to the new management position of director of office operations. In her new position, March will direct general office services, human resource services, and the database development of denominational membership, and will manage BBT offices and telephone and coordinate the office of president. She has been a BBT employee since July 1989, serving much of that time as staff of the insurance department. She will continue to provide part-time leadership for the Brethren Insurance Plan as she transitions to her new job. The Brethren Insurance Plan continues under the direction of interim director Randy Yoder.

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RUSSIA and UKRAINE (July 27 - August 10)
LANDS of the BIBLE (September 26 - October 8)
SCENIC RHINE RIVER CRUISE (Oct. 13-21)
BEHIND THE VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (Nov. 12-24 - with MEDA)

2008 TOURS

AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 2-14)
VIETNAM (January 18 - February 4)
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
LEARNING ABOUT MENNONITES in PUERTO RICO and a SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE (February 27 - March 8)
MEXICO (February 29 - March 9)
EXPERIENCE SOUTH AMERICA (March 28 - April 11)
TULIP TIME CRUISE in HOLLAND and BELGIUM (April 5-13)
MOSCOW and SIBERIA (May 24 - June 4)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 9-21)
ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and WALES (June 25 - July 7)
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CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (October 8-21)

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ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College *(Bridgewater, Va.)*
The grand opening of the Cleo Driver Miller Art Gallery in its new location at the college was held March 21. The gallery, formerly located in the Kline Campus Center, is now on the second floor of the Alexander Mack Memorial Library. A dedication ceremony and reception formally opened the gallery to the public.

Elizabethtown College *(Elizabethtown, Pa.)*
Bridgewater College sociology professor Carl Desportes Bowman presented initial findings about the Church of the Brethren on March 15 at Elizabethtown's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. The talk was the second of three Young Center talks discussing the data gathered for Church Member Profile 2006, the national study of members in the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA, and the Brethren in Christ.

Juniata College *(Huntingdon, Pa.)*
The Juniata student organization PAX-O, a club for students interested in peace and conflict studies, sponsored a march to call on Congress to bring an end to the war in Iraq. The group walked on March 17 from the campus to a bridge near the Huntingdon railroad station, where it stood to protest the war.

University of La Verne *(La Verne, Calif.)*
Jonathan Reed, professor of religion at La Verne, took part in a televised forum on James Cameron's new documentary *The Lost Tomb of Jesus.* Moderated by Ted Koppel and aired March 4 on the Discovery Channel, the forum included a panel of individuals chosen for their knowledge in such fields as archaeology, theology, and biblical research. "Basically, I said that I didn't take this discovery seriously," Reed said. "I think this program will provide an interesting opportunity for critical assessment of the entire subject."

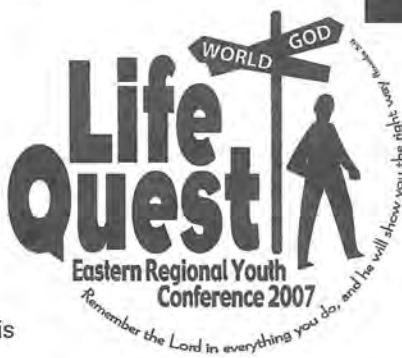
Manchester College *(North Manchester, Ind.)*
Sam Cox, a member of Kokomo (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, earned the highest honor at the 9th Annual Dean's Student Scholarship Symposium at Manchester. Sam, a history and German major, received the Jo Young Switzer Award for Excellence and $150 for his presentation on the sacrifices German-Americans made during World War I. . . . Manchester reported it receives donations from 30.2 percent of its alumni (as of 2005) compared to the national average of 12.9 percent.

McPherson College *(McPherson, Kan.)*
McPherson students watched as a 1968 Chevrolet Camaro they helped to restore crossed the block of the Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Auction and waited for the auctioneer's hammer to fall. At $37,000, the car went to a new owner. It was the seventh year that the college's automotive restoration program has participated in the auction.

ERYC encourages youth on 'Life Quest'

Eastern Regional Youth Conference was held March 9-11 at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa. The conference theme, "Life Quest," was based on Proverbs 3:4 (Good News): "Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way." It focused on providing youth with information that would enable them to make wise choices.

The keynote speaker for worship was Roland Martinson, professor of Pastoral Theology & Ministry/Pastoral Care and Carrie Olson Baalson Professor of Children, Youth, & Family at Luther Seminary. He is also a member of the National Council on Family Relations, as well as an author of several books, including *Gearing Up For Youth Ministry in the 21st Century.* Martinson presented messages during the three worship services that engaged and challenged the youth.



ERYC also offered a wide variety of workshop opportunities, some of which included: "The Power of Enemy Love" by Susanna Farahat of On Earth Peace; "How Would Jesus Tell It Today?" by Marlys Hershberger; "What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up?" by Dennis Lohr; and "Brethren Volunteer Service" by Monica Rice. Saturday evening activities included several short, dramatic performances by Spirit Force of Messiah College and music by Anvah, a band from Western Pennsylvania District.

ERYC is planned cooperatively by the Atlantic Northeast, Middle Pennsylvania, Southern Pennsylvania, and Western Pennsylvania districts. This year's planning team was composed of members from the Middle Pennsylvania and Western Pennsylvania districts and included David Steele, Diana Rok, Beckie Zeek, David Witkovsky, Jerri Heiser Wenger, Amanda Rok, Jeff Falls, and Linda McCauliff.

Anna Palmer

Souper stewardship: *Youth from Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring again this year, asking members of the congregation to donate $1 per person following worship on Super Bowl Sunday. This national endeavor raised more than $7.5 million this year, with 14,000-plus youth from across the country taking part. Live Oak youth raised $155, which was donated to Twin Cities Rescue Mission, a shelter for homeless men in the area. Above, Steven Hodges, Aaron Catledge, and Jeremy McAvoy display the fruits of the project. Their next project is raising funds for the Child Assault Prevention Project, a program to educate children about bullies, stranger danger, and known adults acting inappropriately.*

'Charlotte's Web': *A new spin on really living*

Dying is inevitable. Living is not. You make choices about the way you live. That's a part of the message of *Charlotte's Web* that I think is overlooked. And it comes across fairly clearly in the film version of a story that is not only family-friendly, but perhaps family-essential.

This is one of those children's books I discovered as an adult, specifically when I heard my spouse, Jennie, reading it aloud to our three children. I've read it myself several times, and directed a high school production. The current film adaptation is welcome because, like the book, it is powerful, true to life, and fairly Brethren in its insistence that living for others is what gives life—and death —meaning.

FRANK RAMIREZ

The book, published in 1952, was written by E.B. White, known for such works as *Stuart Little*, *Trumpet of the Swan*, and editing and updating *The Elements of Style*. *Charlotte's Web* tells the story of the pig Wilbur, the runt of the litter, who escapes an early death by a pragmatic farmer when his daughter Fern insists it isn't fair that someone should die for the sin of being born small. Wilbur discovers the blunt truth, thanks to the rat Templeton, that spring pigs don't live to see the winter, but the barn spider Charlotte insists she will find a way to save him because of the friendship they share. Charlotte succeeds, but at great cost to herself.

When Wilbur insists he has done nothing to deserve what Charlotte has done for him, she replies, "After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that."

Although there is an initial revulsion to Charlotte, because she is a spider and because—as she plainly admits—she sucks the blood from flies, everyone in the end is changed for the better because of the way she lived, from those who knew her personally, to those who never knew she existed.

In the film, celebrity characterizations by Robert Redford as the horse, Oprah Winfrey and Cedric the Entertainer as the geese, John Cleese as the sheep, and Kathy Bates and Reba McEntire as the cows sharpen our involvement and make the life-and-death struggle for a little pig meaningful. Steve Buscemi as Templeton and Julia Roberts as Charlotte give the most memorable performances, though the humans in the cast, especially Dakota Fanning as Fern, do their part as well. Obviously the miracles wrought by the special effects lend a startling verisimilitude to the barnyard, but it is script, story, character, and faithfulness to the intent of the book that bring it all to life.

Of course animal stories, which delight us both as children and adults, are really people stories. We project ourselves onto the natural world around us just as surely as we sometimes project ourselves onto the divine, trying to turn Jesus into a comfortable reflection of our own designs and desires, ignoring the uncomfortable challenges of scripture in the process. But this animal story confronts us with our own mortality, and suggests that for life to be fully lived there has to be sacrifice and an identification with the powerless.

Without pushing the analogy too far, we must remember that the temptations of Jesus were to power, preservation, and self-fulfillment—and that the mission of Jesus, when he unrolled the Isaiah scroll in his hometown synagogue, was "to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). No one has ever suggested that we've done anything to merit the grace we have all received.

Are we content simply with salvation? If so, then proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord and sitting on the sidelines, safe from the temptations of the world, ought to be enough for us.

It's not enough for us.

I remember former Annual Conference moderator Chris Bowman insisting, at the last Brethren World Assembly, that we've got Matthew 25 in our genes. The Brethren Service miracle is proof enough that we are not satisfied simply with good enough, maybe because we realize we're not good enough. Being a disciple means living for others. That's real life.

Of course animal stories, which delight us both as children and adults, are really people stories. ...But this animal story confronts us with our own mortality, and suggests that for life to be fully lived there has to be sacrifice and an identification with the powerless.

So often the term "family entertainment" means something bland enough, and safe enough, to avoid offending. But *Charlotte's Web*, both book and film, is truly entertaining, and definitely intended for the family. There was a time we read aloud to the children. If you've seen the film together as a family, it might be a good idea to rummage around the attic for the book.

We're all going to die. As children we discover this sooner or later. Fern knows it. Wilbur discovers it. And life just isn't fair. But even with death hanging over us, we can make a conscious choice to really live. And that's worth doing.

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

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Charlotte's Web*. **Rating:** G. **Director:** Gary Winick. **Running time:** 113 minutes.
Release date: The movie hit screens in December 2006; the DVD (retail price $29.99) was released on April 3.
For further reading: The original book of *Charlotte's Web* is available in paperback (from $7.99) and hardcover (from $15.99).

Participate in the Caring Ministries Training Opportunities at this Annual Conference

June 29 - July 4, 2007 Cleveland, Ohio

Insight Sessions*
Mutual Help Groups
"Passport to Wellness" Activities and
Seated Massage at the ABC Booth.

Visit ABC's website for a full schedule of ABC's program activities during Annual Conference on behalf of the caring ministries.

CEUs available for all ABC Insight Sessions.

Recognition Dinner

Music Therapy: Medicine for the Body, Healing for the Soul — SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 5 P.M.
Learn how the medical profession embraces the use of music in treatment from Deforia Lane, a trail-blazer in music therapy. Experience the art and science of music therapy through the eyes of patients, their families and the staff of University Hospitals of Cleveland. The research will surprise you. Learn helpful techniques for personal and professional use throughout the lifespan.

Deforia Lane is the director of the Ireland Cancer Center as well as director of Music Therapy at University Hospitals of Cleveland. Lane has presented at ABC's National Older Adult Conference and Caring Ministries Assembly with conference goers telling us that she was one of the highlights for both events.

ABC's Recognition Dinner will also honor recipients of its annual Caregiving Awards.

Denominational Deacon Luncheon

Can You Do One Thing? — MONDAY, JULY 2, NOON
Each of us has at least one gift — one expression or style of caring — to give. When we give that particular gift consistently, generously, honestly, openly, we open a space for God's presence to be felt in the lives of those around us. What if every deacon gave their one gift of caring in that spirit? It would bring God's wholeness to the church.

Kurt Borgmann is the pastor of the Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind. He has been a featured presenter at National Older Adult Conference and Annual Conference.

Tickets regularly sell out so order your tickets early using the Meal Form in the Annual Conference Packet.

Association of Brethren Caregivers
Serving the Caring Ministries of the Church of the Brethren
(800) 323-8039 www.brethren-caregivers.org

Pontius' Puddle

Save the Elder John Kline Homestead

Elder John Kline's Homestead is for sale. Brethren have the opportunity to buy this historic place and preserve it from destruction by local developers. However, we must act quickly!

Elder John Kline exemplified Brethren ideals as missionary, annual meeting moderator, counselor, and doctor. He rode an estimated 100,000 miles on horseback in service to the Brethren. During the Civil War Elder Kline labored tirelessly to preserve unity of the Brethren—work that contributed to his murder.

Portion of Panel 5, Brethren Historical Murals, Camp Mack

John Kline was "arguably the most beloved of all personalities in Brethren history." —Donald F. Durnbaugh

The John Kline Homestead could become a center to teach Brethren ideals to current and future generations. But first, Brethren must own it. Your financial gift will help preserve the John Kline legacy on this historic site.

For additional information, contact:
Pastor Paul Roth
Linville Creek Church of the Brethren
PO Box 274
Broadway, VA 22815
Phone: 540-896-5001
proth@bridgewater.edu
Brochures and donation forms available.

See the John Kline display at the CrossRoads exhibit at Annual Conference.

We need to show the flame

The letters to MESSENGER, of late, seem to be focusing on our denomination's decline. Some letters have been suggesting that our name, the Church of the Brethren, is to blame.

This leads me to say something that recalls the lines of a recent country music song. I have to say: "It's not how you say the name; it's how you lay the blame." Come on, fellows, we have to admit that our denomination along with many others has yielded to a culture of male domination. Yet I do not believe a name change will help. In business, changing a name presents loss of business until the new name is well publicized and established. The Church of the Brethren has had enough loss.

Women have had a significant role in our denomination for almost 300 years. It's not how we say the name, but it is how we display the flame. Our hearts need to burn with the flame of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts need to burn with the flame of serving God. Our hearts need to burn with the flame of doing the work of peace. Our hearts need to burn with the flame of doing justice. Our hearts need to burn with the flame of showing mercy, forgiveness, and love. Our hearts should burn with presenting Christ to the world!

Donald Flint
Flint, Mich.

Global warming isn't to blame

Regarding your editorial in the March issue: We have some beautiful lakes in the northern part of our country, some hundreds of feet deep, called the Great Lakes. I have been led to believe they were carved out by glaciers, and I don't have a problem believing it is true.

I don't believe the global warming that caused the glaciers to melt was caused by burning fossil fuels, do you?

Don Bruner
Somerset, Pa.

New worship doesn't pass test

I am approaching my 90th year, long enough to gain insight and perspective, to observe impulses, biases, and predispositions due to the forces of good and evil that exert themselves from inside and outside the church (consult the book of Acts). Down through the years I have witnessed umpteen -isms come and go.

I have attended worship services where

digital technology has been installed, where the chancel was emptied of pulpit furniture to make room for an array of dance band instruments with a guitarist who could plunk out no more than two chords, and where a bald man sitting in the front pew gyrated his head around to the thrumming cadence of Jesus junk music repeated week after week after week. I am not opposed to the best of contemporary church music, but only if it stands the test of authenticity, where text and music unite to send a clear message of hope to a dying world.

I have read carefully the MESSENGER article (January 2007, "Digital Stained Glass"). Frankly, if the truth were known, the new forms of worship have more to do with a revolt against the organized church than anything else, which is evidenced by the fact that the Brethren lost 76,012 members during the decades 1959 to 1999, plus 166 seminary-trained clergy left the pastoral ministry in the decade 1950 to 1960.

The questions to ask are: Will the new format fill the empty pews in the Frederick, Md., church? Will it stop the war in Iraq? Will it lessen the number of babies born out of wedlock? Will it stop the number of foreign-born from entering the country illegally, and will it treat those already here with honor and respect? And will multimillion-dollar-a-year executives agree to a lesser salary and provide their employees with a living wage?

OUR HEARTS NEED TO BURN WITH THE FLAME OF DOING JUSTICE. OUR HEARTS NEED TO BURN WITH THE FLAME OF SHOWING MERCY, FORGIVENESS, AND LOVE. OUR HEARTS SHOULD BURN WITH PRESENTING CHRIST TO THE WORLD!

If it doesn't do that, I am ready to go back to the "Church in the Wildwood," a gospel song mimicking the church of my childhood with its simple message of peace, love, and goodwill.

E.G. Carper
La Verne, Calif.

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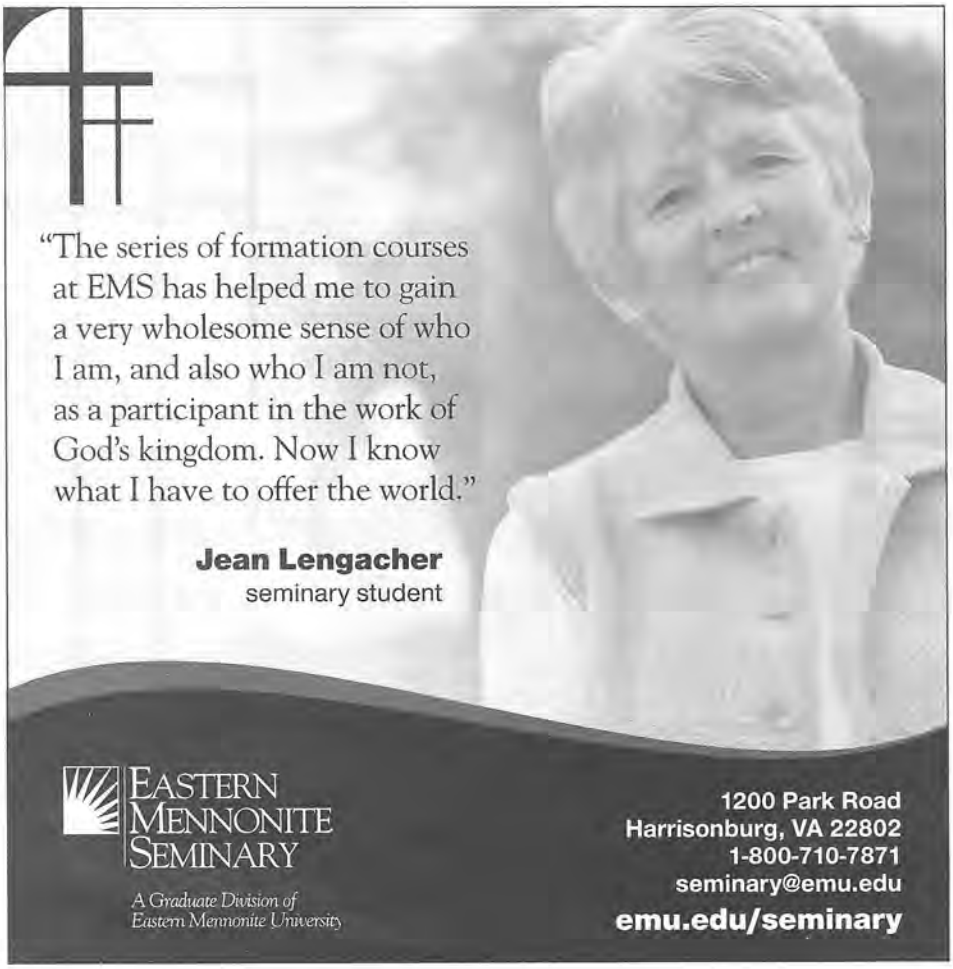

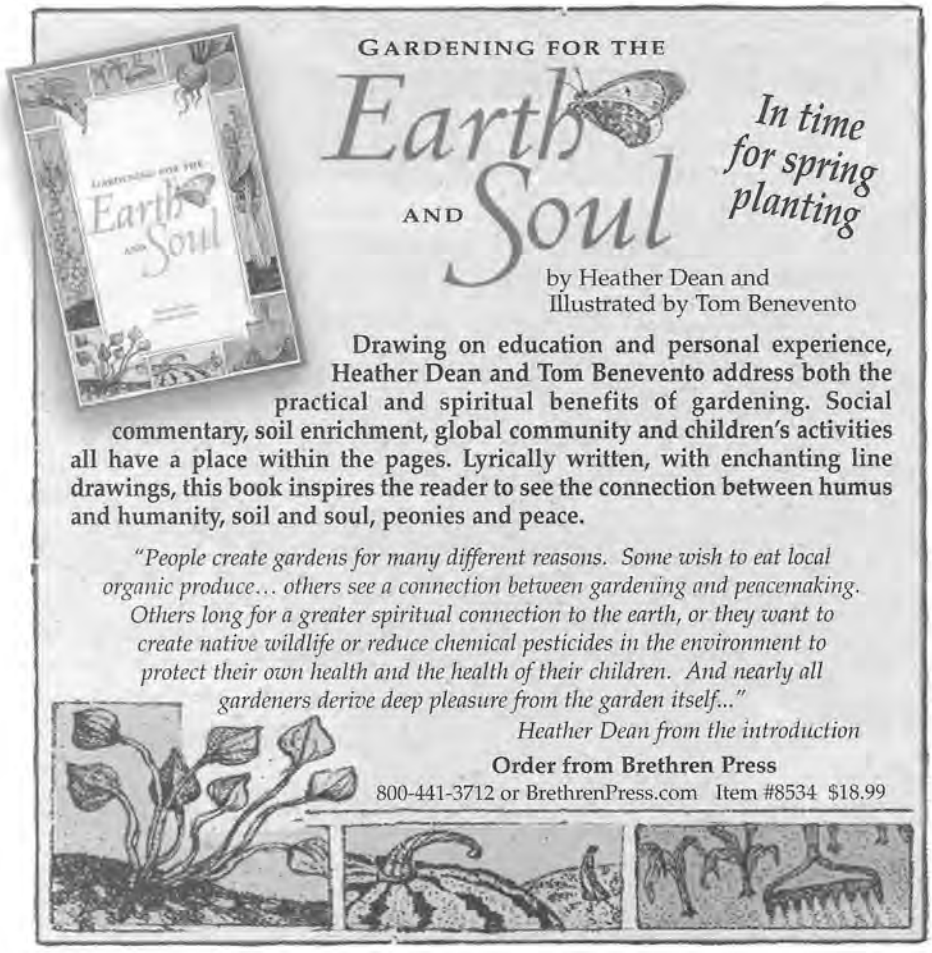

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2008 Brethren Anniversary Tours Ed-Ventures, Inc., a tour operator with over 30 years of experience in European group travel, is offering 3 different and creative itineraries to Europe in summer 2008, all to include the 300-year anniversary celebration in Schwarzenau. Each tour accompanied by a professional tour director and Brethren pastor. Zurich-Amsterdam (Host: Jim Miller); Berlin-Zurich (Host: Jim Hardenbrook); Munich-Amsterdam (Host: Fred Bernhard). For information and brochures call 800-658-7128 or visit: www.ed-ventures.com.

Executive Staff The Palms Estates, located in Central Florida, is a 55-and-over Independent Living Retirement Community with 71 homes, 40 RV sites, founded by the Church of the Brethren. This is an excellent employment opportunity for an experienced husband and wife team. Responsibilities include leadership and management of the total operation of the Palms Estates. Candidates should possess strong organizational, administrative, accounting, verbal/written communication, and interpersonal skills acquired through training and experience. Knowledge of budgets, financial statements, and computer technology related to all office functions required.

Qualified applicants need the ability to manage multiple tasks involving residents needs and concerns, maintain harmonious relations with related organizations, insure compliance with governmental regulations, and manage a small citrus grove and maintenance staff.

On-site residence and office provided in addition to salary and other benefits. Send resumé and 3 references by June 15, 2007, to The Palms Estates at PO Box 364, Lorida FL, 33857. E-mail palms@embarqmail.com Web: www.cob-net.org/home/palms-estates

Little Swatara Church of the Brethren, Bethel, Pennsylvania to celebrate 250 years June 16 and 17, 2007. Activities scheduled: Saturday, June 16, 2007: Tours of four old meeting houses and cemeteries; Pennsylvania German service; Dinner theater recounting the history of the church. Sunday, June 17, 2007: Worship service, welcoming back ministers from the congregation and former pastors; carry-in lunch; welcoming all visitors; additional tours of old meeting houses and cemeteries. For more information contact: Little Swatara Church of the Brethren, 31 Rehrersburg Rd. PO Box 437, Bethel, PA 19507. Phone 717-933-4723 or contact co-chairs: Richard & Beatrice Frantz, 35 Wintersville Rd, Richland PA 17087-9611. e-mail rbfrantz@paonline.com.

Have you always wanted to work in a bookstore? Brethren Press is looking for volunteers to assist in set-up, operation, and tear-down of the Annual Conference bookstore in Cleveland. If you have interest and time to volunteer, contact Jean Clements at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120 or jclements_gb@brethren.org.

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

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

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

New Members

Akron, First, Akron, Ohio: Ashley Fuller, Janet Spellman, Andy Myers, Roy Barr, Janet Barr
Antelope Park, Lincoln, Neb.: Bill Edgar, Martha Hakenkamp, Emilie Corbin, Ruth Edgar, Ethan Edgar
Arcadia, Ind.: Shara Baker, Basil Baker, Jamie Allen, Karen Elliott, Ed Elliott, Greg Knapp
Big Creek, Cushing, Okla.: Carlotta Thomas, Shawn Sissom, Carol Cooper, Donna Cooper, Shirley Weaver
Bridgewater, Va.: Jeff Carr, Wendy Carr, Jeremy Driver, Lois Stover, Chris Zepp, Amanda Zepp
Dupont, Ohio: Dennis Wagner
Eastwood, Akron, Ohio: Tim Casto, Debbie Casto, Bud Boganwright, Alice Boganwright, Cheryl LeBarre, Samantha Markland, Karen Sizemore
Fairview, Cordova, Md.: Katelyn McNeal, Levi Kolakowski
Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.: Jeremy Martin, Elizabeth Martin, Steve Petersheim, Delbert Elliott
Greenmount, Harrisonburg, Va.: Lyndsey Bolton
Harrisonburg, First, Harrisonburg, Va.: Abigayle Hassler, C. W. Grandle, III, Teri Shifflett Bosley, Bradley Rodriguez, Melissa Thomas Rodriguez, Mary Miller, Jacob Hansen, Beau Dickenson
Jackson Park, Jonesborough, Tenn.: Pete Roudebush, Martha Roudebush, Mark Miller, Kim Miller, Cecelia Miller
La Verne, Calif.: Chris Bache, Chuck Duffie, Jen Duffie, Betty Miles, Ronny Sanchez, Ann Waddelow, Don Waddelow, Myrna Wheeler
Lebanon, Mount Sidney, Va.: Joel Ballew, Linetta Ballew
McPherson, Kan.: Glen Funk, Edythe Funk, Tom Hurst, Jan Hurst
Middlebury, Ind.: Ben Freeze, Grant Swarm, Tyler Roebuck, Aaron Stickel, Max Troyer, Alex Schrock, Spencer Short, Alanna Wise, Brittany Wise, Sharon Houser, John Knepp, Pat Siefke, Suzanne Steward, Nick Kauffman, Brittany Yoder
Olathe, Kan.: Marlon Wine, Lois Wine
Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va.: Harry Shelton, Jane Shelton
Polo, Ill.: Gloria Bellows, Shirley Turner, Vernon Meyer, Lorraine Meyer
Richmond, Ind.: Karen Poling, Ron Clapp-Itnyre, Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, Tracy Schmittler, Enten Eller, Carla Maurer
Timberville, Va.: Tony Biller, Kayla Biller, J. J. Funk, Amy Funk, Kevin Dellinger, Jennifer Dellinger, Ray Ellerman, Steve Larrabee, Linda Larrabee, Lloyd Shirkey, Randy Collins, Crystal Collins, Stacey Vaughan, Kim Vaughan
Uniontown, Pa.: Mollie Stacy, Laura Scottodiluzio, David Scottodiluzio
Waynesboro, Pa.: Jane Hause

Anniversaries

Anderson, Charles and Wilma, Fort Wayne, Ind., 60
Barnes, Robert and Grace, Sebring, Fla., 55
Beckenbaugh, Jack and Lucille, Waynesboro, Pa., 55
Bense, William and Janis, Windber, Pa., 50
Bever, Frank and Olive, North Manchester, Ind., 60
Bryant, Kenny and Ruby, Goshen, Ind., 70
DeCoursey, Wesley and Verda, McPherson, Kan., 65
Dick, LaDean and Mary Alice, Fort Wayne, Ind., 60
Fields, Ernest and Isabelle, Goshen, Ind., 60
Fleagle, Howard and Betsy, Greencastle, Pa., 50
Forcino, Dick and Carol, Boonsboro, Md., 50
Grimm, Bill and Doris, New Carlisle, Ohio, 55
Hawkins, Bob and Nancy, Middlebury, Ind., 50
Hull, Perry and Mildred, Waynesboro, Pa., 55
Jones, Dave and Irene, Middlebury, Ind., 50
Kehr, Jim and Marilyn, Goshen, Ind., 50
Lilyquist, Everett and Betty, Sebring, Fla., 55
Mock, Gordon and Virginia, Goshen, Ind., 50
Powell, Ben and Barbara, Charlottesville, Va., 55
Snell, Arthur and Hazel, McPherson, Kan., 65
Sutton, Charlie and Wilma Frantz, McPherson, Kan., 60

Deaths

Anderson, Charles, 91, Uniontown, Pa., Jan. 17
Andes, Carroll Davis, Sr., 81, Timberville, Va., Feb. 10
Angle, Eileen S., 85, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 8
Benner, Richard Willis, 62, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 30
Blosser, Irene, 94, Middlebury, Ind., May 27, 2006
Bock, Joseph L., 78, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 7
Boothe, Fannie Virginia Wimmer, 83, Keswick, Va., March 3
Bowles, Cecil M., 71, Roanoke, Va., Feb. 23
Brookins, Wilbur, 88, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 25
Burkhart, Dale, 86, Cando, N.D., Jan. 9
Byler, Gretta, 89, Hummelstown, Pa., Feb. 28
Byrnes, Evelyn Virginia, 67, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 22
Cantrell, Lillian, 84, Cushing, Okla., June 28
Castle, Drexell, 63, New Carlisle, Ohio, Jan. 28
Claybaugh, Dale, 81, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 29
Collins, Helen Martha Clark Follis, 92, Carmichael, Calif., Nov. 17
Cornell, Mary, 86, Hopwood, Pa., Dec. 9
Cosner, Wesley Homer, 73, Petersburg, W.Va., Feb. 16
Cox, S. Norman, 81, Dayton, Va., Jan. 17
Cripe, Guy, 95, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 14
Davidge, Marjorie Andrews, 89, Richmond, Va., Feb. 17
Depoy, Minnie Lee Freese, 90, Lacey Spring, Va., Feb. 15
Diehl, Arliss Faye Dedrick, 75, Waynesboro, Va., Feb. 17
Dixon, Randolph T., 83, Madison, Va., Feb. 8
Dove, Alda Lee, 72, Mathias, W.Va., Feb. 9
Dove, Doris Naomi, 81, Timberville, Va., Jan. 9
Dovel, Katherine Virginia, 87, Rileyville, Va., Feb. 5
Driver, Galen Thomas, 98, Dayton, Va., Jan. 21
Durham, Nellie, 89, Denver, Colo., Feb. 11
Elliot, Helen, 72, New Paris, Ind., Feb. 16
Elliott, John Stephen, 60, Broadway, Va., Jan. 2
Fitzwater, Noah M., 95, Moorefield, W.Va., Feb. 19
Fitzwater, Ruth Finks, 85, Broadway, Va., Jan. 4
Garner, Florice M., 91, Pemberville, Ohio, Feb. 23
Gilbert, Emerson, 81, Womelsdorf, Pa., Sept. 22
Gleason, Gertrude, 94, Sebring, Fla., Oct. 24
Gochenour, Mary Varner, 90, Luray, Va., Jan. 7
Goughnour, Joseph H., 85, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 21
Grove, Leland F., 85, Laurens, Iowa, Nov. 17
Guldin, Kathleen, 78, Wyomissing, Pa., Nov. 22
Hay, Robert L., 65, Gettysburg, Pa., Feb. 7
Heiny, Viola Turner, 91, Denver, Colo., Feb. 6
Henry, Don K., 90, Brookville, Ohio, Feb. 22
Hershberger, Donna Belle, 85, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 30
Hiteshew, Helen, 84, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 4
Hodson, William Marcellus, 78, Strasburg, Va., Jan. 27
Holmes, Mabel, 92, South Bend, Ind., Jan. 2
Holsinger, Vivian, 83, Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 28
Hoover, Hazel, 86, Modesto, Calif., Feb. 14
Hovis, Donald E., 77, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 16
Hyer, Vendetta A., 86, Michigan City, Ind., Nov. 22
Jarrell, Roberta, 85, Silver Spring, Md., Feb. 14
Jennings, Joseph R., 95, La Verne, Calif., Nov. 4
Johnson, Betty, 76, New Windsor, Md., Feb. 16
Joseph, David Y., 93, Onekama, Mich., Feb. 14
Keesey, John J., 85, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 27
Kinzie, Bobby, 74, Cushing, Okla, Nov. 6
LaFollette, Ruby Mary Neff, 72, Winchester, Va., Feb. 8
Lambert, Velma Catherine, 71, Franklin, W.Va., Dec. 28
Lauderdale, Jenny Sue, 31, Portland, Ore., July 16
Layman, Everette Owen, 82, Broadway, Va., Feb. 4
Leedy, Jenny Spangler, 88, Centreville, Md., Dec. 2
Markley, Edna, 86, Donaldson, Ind., Dec. 2
McFerren, Mary Lucille, 88, Quincy, Pa., Nov. 14
Meashey, Candace, 88, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 25
Metsker, John, 91, Lawrence, Kan., Feb. 4
Mills, Lucille, 92, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 9
Minnich, A. Virginia, 90, Waynesboro, Pa., Oct. 8
Moore, Kay, 68, Fremont, Calif., Dec. 8
Murphy, Opal, 75, North Liberty, Ind., Jan. 13
Musser, Anna Lee Stover, 89, New Market, Va., Jan. 23
Mylin, Richard, 49, Holtwood, Pa., Feb. 23
Ogden, S. Ruth, 94, La Verne, Calif., Dec. 16
Pennington, Clara P., 94, Franklin, W.Va., Dec. 29
Peterson, Jim, 72, North Liberty, Ind., Feb. 26
Poff, Mary H., 96, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 26
Ray, Jerry Wayne, 47, Broadway, Va., Feb. 15
Rhodes, Betty, 73, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 6
Robison, Helen L., 66, Cushing, Okla, Aug. 28
Roland, Elsie, 93, Reading, Pa., Nov. 2
Schultz, Gary, 66, Hopwood, Pa., Feb. 11
Senour, Ruth, 87, La Verne, Calif., Sept. 2
Shaffer, Richard M., Sr., 75, Gettysburg, Pa., Feb. 5
Sheets, Berniece D., 86, Linville, Va., Feb. 17
Shipe, Robert Leroy, 64, Mathias, W.Va., Feb. 13
Shoemaker, Carl, 91, Woodbury, Pa., Jan. 30
Showalter, Alda, 79, Harrisonburg, Va., July 25
Silveus, Louis Lee, 68, Edinburg, Va., Jan. 31
Silvious, Jacob Lee, 6, New Market, Va., Feb. 11
Simmons, Lina Viola, 86, Mount Solon, Va., Feb. 11
Simpson, Emma, 87, Lititz, Pa., March 8
Smith, Grace K., 83, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 31
Smith, Lacy E., 95, Franklin, W.Va., Jan. 19
Smith, Mildred L., 94, Emmitsburg, Md., Oct. 9
Stiles, Janice, 64, Cushing, Okla, Jan. 16
Stower, Jack, 64, Dixon, Ill., Feb. 19
Studebaker, Lester, 88, Fairborn, Ohio, Feb. 17
Stumbaugh, Mary, 89, Lima, Ohio, Feb. 27
Thomas, Donald E., 89, Mount Morris, Ill., Feb. 26
Timmons, Guy, 93, Shippensburg, Pa., Feb. 19
Tritle, Geneva June, 82, Akron, Ohio, Jan. 20
Turner, Carl David, 80, Broadway, Va., Jan. 14
Walker, Juanita, 87, La Verne, Calif., May 1, 2006
Ward, Freda M., 86, Troy, Ohio, Feb. 10
Wayne, Bernice, 87, West Reading, Pa., Jan. 29
Weiss, Larry, 66, Lakeville, Ind., Dec. 12
Wine, Franklin Steward, 73, Timberville, Va., Feb. 20
Wine, Merlin Clarence, 69, Staunton, Va., Dec. 31
Wise, Carlyn Maree, 99, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 31
Wolfe, Effie Mary Strawser, 96, Eglon, W.Va., Nov. 19, 2005
Woods, Robert F., 82, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 26
Wyrick, Clarence Eugene, 86, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 30
Young, Willis Coleman, 65, Alexandria, Va., Feb. 13
Ziegler, Elizabeth, 97, Sebring, Fla., Oct. 1
Zook, Ray, 63, Middlebury, Ind., May 26, 2006

Licensings

Collier, Cody, N. Ind. Dist. (Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.), March 4
Doud, Dennis, N. Plains Dist. (Ottumwa, Iowa), Jan. 7
Kinsey, Kevin, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Wilmington, Del.), Dec. 31
McKimmy, Matthew, Virlina Dist. (Good Shepherd, Blacksburg, Va.), Aug. 27
Shelton, John G., Jr., S. Ohio Dist. (Bradford, Ohio), Feb. 11

Ordinations

Edwards, Charles R., Virlina Dist. (Eden, N.C.), March 19, 2006
Gallimore, Michael L., Virlina Dist. (Boones Chapel, Snow Creek, Rocky Mount, Va.), Nov. 12
Hinton, William J., Sr., Virlina Dist. (Trinity, Troutville, Va.), Feb. 18
Hott, Gerald M., W. Marva Dist. (Capon Chapel, Points, W.Va.), Feb. 11
Mackie, Brian J., Mich. Dist. (New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Feb. 11
Polzin, Nathan D., Mich. Dist. (New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Feb. 11

Placements

Bell, David W., pastor, Eden, Canton, Ohio, Feb. 15
Clister, Judith Lynn, from interim pastor to pastor/chaplain, Fahrney-Keedy Home & Village, Boonsboro, Md., March 5
DiMarco, Anthony G., pastor, Polo, Ill., March 4
Doud, Dennis, pastor, Ottumwa, Iowa, Jan. 1
Hanks, Thomas P. J. from pastor, Bethlehem, Boones Mill, Va., to pastor, Moneta, Lake Side, Moneta, Va., Feb. 15
Kerkove, David, from pastor, Plymouth, Ind., to pastor, Panther Creek, Adel, Iowa, Jan. 1
Manthos, Michael C., pastor, Welty, Smithsburg, Md., March 1
McLean, Ron, pastor, Christian Church Uniting, Virginia Beach, Va., Feb. 26
Pyles, Tyowen R., from pastor, Pitsburg, Arcanum, Ohio, to minister of youth and small groups, West Charleston, Tipp City, Ohio, Jan. 28
Shelton, Harry W., pastor, Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va., March 1
Shroyer, Michael L., associate pastor, Markle, Ind., Feb. 26
Turner, Ted M., Jr., pastor, Pulaski, First, Pulaski, Va., Feb. 1
Wenger, William W., pastor, Moxham, Johnstown, Pa., March 1

That's how you do church

This winter I had the chance to see an evening of one-act plays at a local high school. One of them was titled "The Universal Language," and centered on a shy young woman who takes a night class to learn a new language called "Unamunda."

Unamunda sounds like a string of gibberish, borrowing bits from a variety of languages and other sounds, and the teacher eventually admits that it's all a scam he created to make money. The young woman, however, catches the passion of his underlying vision for a universal language. In it, she finds a new measure of confidence herself.

WALT WILTSCHEK
Messenger Editor

"Language," she explains, "is the opposite of loneliness, and if everybody spoke the same language no one would ever be lonely."

By Christian tradition, language has been "confounded" ever since the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. It seems that Christians have had a difficult time talking with each other ever since, even when the actual words they speak come from the same dictionary.

Over the past year-plus, Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) has had several people traveling the country, meeting with pastors in many of the denomination's districts. About five years earlier, a similar effort sent various General Board staff and board members across the country for conversations.

Why go to all that trouble and expense? As some business leaders have learned, often nothing is quite the same as talking face-to-face. Technology can be extraordinarily useful, but mass mailings and e-mail and conference calls have their limits. Eventually human contact (and eye contact) remains at the heart of relationship and community.

That's what Samuel Bowman found during those recent BVS contacts, when he spent much of a year on special assignment and trekked some 17,000 miles to make the district visits.

"The idea was to go to congregations, build bridges, have face-to-face contact, and talk about BVS," Bowman said, in an article written by fellow BVS worker Todd Flory. "A large number of them (the pastors) thanked me for coming, for being a face, a warm body, instead of a piece of paper that could slide across a table into a trash can," he added.

Not surprisingly, he found abundant diversity and a wide range of views. He also found deep commitment, and an appreciation for taking the time to hear out all those differing viewpoints. Bowman recalled one pastor in particular who stood before him with a finger thrust forward and said, passionately, "Now that's how you do church."

"If one thing can be gleaned from this (special assignment), it's that our churches want more personal contact," Bowman said, "with each other, with their leadership, with programs, and I would say with God as well."

An article from a Chicago zoo a few months ago told the story of a pygmy loris, a small Asian mammal sometimes dubbed a "slow loris" for its very deliberate movements and its ability to remain motionless for hours. This particular male, however, was unusually hyper, and the female in the enclosure with him eyed her new companion with great suspicion.

"Our female may not be sure he's a fellow pygmy loris yet," one of the curators said in the article. "Once he slows down some, the pair should be fine."

Perhaps Brethren need to take more time in our communication and relationships, too. Virlina District executive David Shumate noted a few years ago that our denomination is becoming more and more regionalized. "It's more difficult for us to be one and the same everywhere in the same way," he told a district conference audience.

Like the loris, Brethren often seem a bit suspicious of other Brethren. We seemingly wonder if we, too, are indeed still part of the same "species." But if we sit down—"eyeball-to-eyeball," as my former boss would say—and take time to talk, we may find we have more in common at the core than we think. And where we do differ, we may learn to hold those variations with respect.

In the love of Christ and the richness of community, we can find a true universal language. That's how you do church.—Ed.

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COMING IN JUNE: Annual Conference preview, including a profile of moderator Belita Mitchell, an introduction to the host city of Cleveland, Ohio, and a look at the business on this year's agenda; Nigeria workcamps; a seminary president retires; Bible study on Joel, and more.

New Directions

These institutions share a common heritage with the Church of the Brethren. Diverse in location, size, and offerings within their academic and extra-curricular programs, each offers a world of educational value and opportunity to its students.

To find out more about the exciting direction in which these institutions can lead, visit the websites listed below.

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Bridgewater, Virginia
www.bridgewater.edu

Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.etown.edu

Juniata College
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
www.juniata.edu

University of La Verne
La Verne, California
www.ulv.edu

Manchester College
North Manchester, Indiana
www.manchester.edu

McPherson College
McPherson, Kansas
www.mcpherson.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary
Richmond, Indiana
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Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.bcaabroad.org

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN HIGHER EDUCATION

New Opportunities

Paul Jeffrey/ACT-CWS

From the grassroots up

Displaced by Darfur's four years of violence, Sudanese women tend crops in their host village. In Sudan and in 20 other countries, the Global Food Crisis Fund helps the hungry help themselves by providing vegetable seeds and tools, constructing wells, and planting tree nurseries. Partnering with the impoverished to achieve long-term food security is what the Global Food Crisis Fund is about. Join us in helping transform lives from the grassroots up.

Send your contribution to Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. For more information call 800 323-8039, ext. 264, or visit www.brethren.org/genbd/global_mission/gfcf.htm.

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