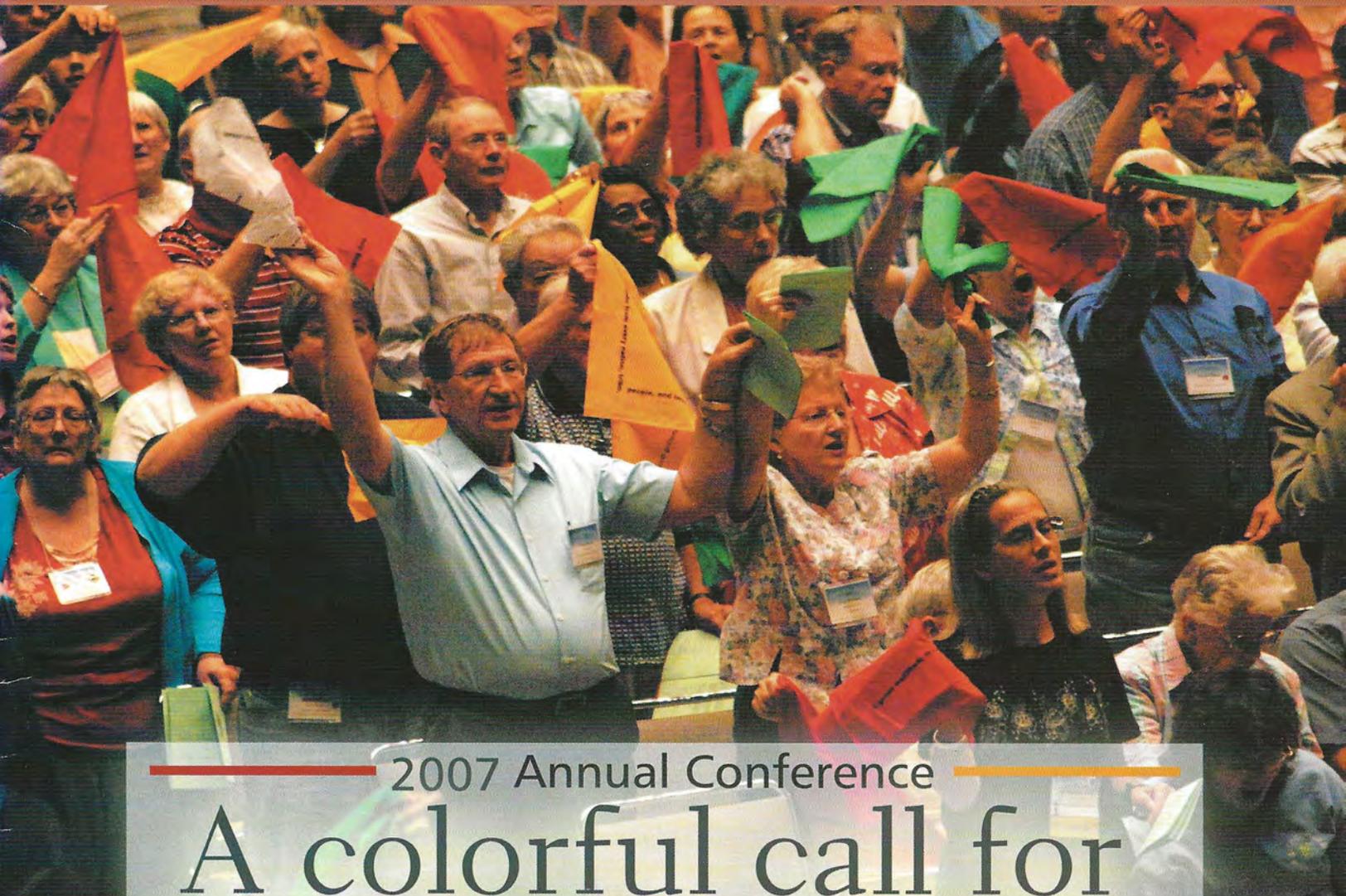


Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2007 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

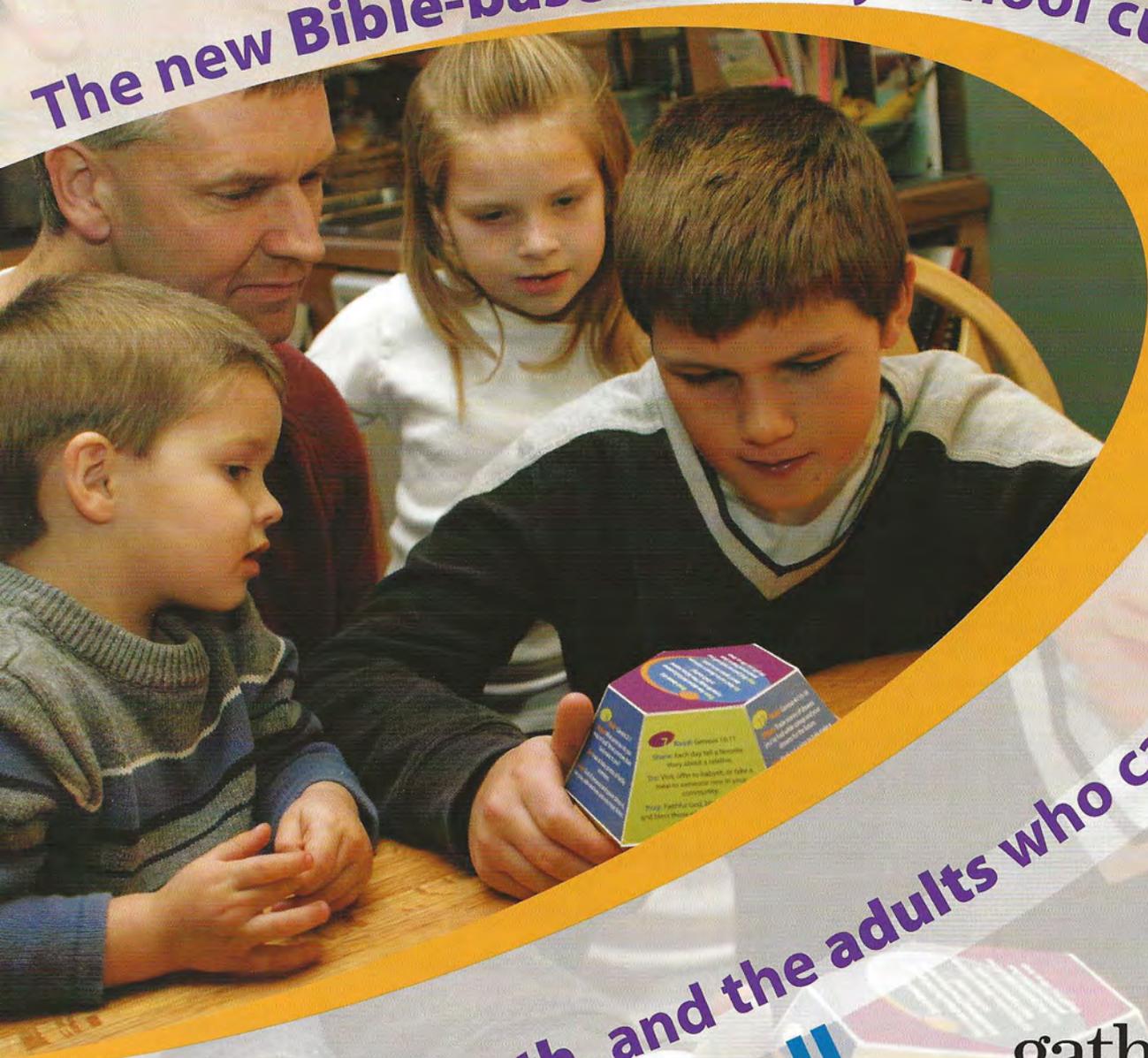


2007 Annual Conference

A colorful call for CHANGE

For where two or three are
gathered in my name,

The new Bible-based Sunday school curriculum

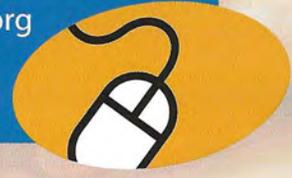


for children, youth, and the adults who care for them
Order Now for Fall



Produced by:
Church of the Brethren
Mennonite Church USA
Mennonite Church Canada
Printed in USA

Orders and information:
www.gatherround.org
Brethren Press
1-800-441-3712



I am there
among them.—Matthew 18:20

“... 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**



ONTHECOVER

Decades ago, the “Chautauqua salute” was used to commission missionaries, with people waving handkerchiefs as they headed into the field. At the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, participants in Monday night’s worship were invited to revive that tradition with a new spin: waving the cloths in a sea of color to challenge the denomination toward a new era of intercultural engagement and inclusiveness. “We have made many strong statements (on this subject),” Monday night speaker Duane Grady said, “but we have not always lived them as boldly as we spoke.” Cover photo by Glenn I. Riegel.

8 Cleveland rocks! Annual Conference 2007

In the shadow of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the 3,500-some people attending this year’s Annual Conference rocked in inspiring worship and rolled—eventually—through a long and heavy business agenda. A cluster of stories examines this year’s “Big Meeting” in northeastern Ohio, including a glance at preparations for the denomination’s 300th anniversary that will be the centerpiece of Annual Conference 2008.

16 Simply amazing: National Junior High Conference

For the first time, junior high youth from across the denomination were invited to come together for a conference of their own. About 800 people met at Elizabethtown College in June for the charter event.

18 Jonah: The perfect prophet

The book of Jonah tells the brief and rather well known tale of a prophet that God sent to the sinful city of Nineveh. But Jonah reacts in a way that may seem understandable to many readers.

DEPARTMENTS

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

The balcony of the Cleveland Convention Center provided a great vantage point when thousands of Brethren worshipers at Annual Conference began waving colorful bandanas. They were responding to preacher Duane Grady, who asked the assembly to take an old symbol and give it a new meaning. The Chautauqua salute was the way Annual Conferences traditionally sent missionaries off to other lands—with a blessing symbolized by waving white handkerchiefs. This year's multicolored version was the way conferencegoers expressed their commitment to help bring about the vision of Revelation 7:9, which was printed on the bandanas: "A great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language worshiping God."

The flutter of bandanas looked impressive. It was a beautiful and powerful symbol of the richness of diversity. Later in the week, delegates put some muscle behind the waving by endorsing an assertive statement on interculturalism. They acknowledged big challenges in the paper, but agreed they wanted to keep the goals lofty.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

This is not the first statement the Church of the Brethren has issued on this topic. In 18 years we have adopted papers on "Inclusion of Ethnicity in the Church of the Brethren" (1989), "Brethren and Black Americans" (1991), "Community: A Tribe of Many Feathers" (1994), and "Resolution on Ethnic Representation" (2001). Clearly our intentions are good. But also short-lived.

Why do we lose our resolve so quickly? Perhaps because the issue is not as important to white people as it is to people who are not white. This is not a criticism; it's simply a reality. In the United States, most white people have the luxury of thinking about racial issues on an occasional basis. People who are not white think about race all the time.

After years of observing many students over many years, psychologist and Spelman College president Beverly Daniel Tatum noticed that students of color almost always mention their racial or ethnic group when they're asked to complete the sentence "I am ____." White students almost never do. One white student was even perplexed when asked to describe herself ethnically. Finally, she said, "I'm just normal!" Whiteness is "the unexamined norm," reflects Tatum in her book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

Examining this norm is harder than clapping enthusiastically during a cross-cultural worship experience or waving a bandana. It's harder than voting for the ethnic name on the ballot. But it's a first step toward realizing the vision of Revelation 7:9. And, in the words of Duane Grady, "Those of us who have created the church as it currently exists have a calling to help lead it more fully toward the biblical vision for which Christ lived, died, and was resurrected to proclaim."

Wendy McFadden

HOW TO REACH US

MESSINGER

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

Subscription rates:

\$17.50 individual rate
- \$32 for 2 years
\$14.50 gift rate
\$14.50 church club rate
- \$27 for 2 years
\$ 1.25 student (per month)

If you move, clip address label and send with new address to MESSENGER Subscriptions, at the above address. Allow at least five weeks for address change.

Connect electronically: For a free subscription to Newline, the Church of the Brethren e-mail news report, write cobnews@aol.com.

To view the official Church of the Brethren website, go to www.brethren.org.

A free study guide for each issue of MESSENGER is available on the site; go to keyword "MESSENGER" and click on the study guide link.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © September 2007, Church of the Brethren General Board.

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 11 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren General Board. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694.



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

The world comes to Durham Church intentionally aims for cultural diversity

Since the Peace Covenant Church in Durham, N.C., was planted in 1994, there has been a consistent yearning to be what God desires. With the closest Church of the Brethren 80 miles away and the group comprised of members in their 20s and 30s in an urban setting, we knew it wasn't going to be business as usual.

From the beginning we knew that challenge No. 1 was going to be translating the Brethren message into a context understandable by a population that did not know us. This meant expanding our Brethren identity and not just "doing church" Brethren-style.

Durham is about 40 percent Caucasian and 40 percent African-American, but the Hispanic, Indian, Asian, and African communities are all increasing at a remarkable rate. We wondered why our church did not represent that demographic reality. Our first priority was to help our members feel more comfortable with cultural differences. Through prayer and study, we concluded that we needed to intentionally reach out to people in the international community.

First, we began doing "International Food, Friends, and Film" (IFFF) events on the first Saturday evening each month, with a potluck meal and foreign film (often in other languages with subtitles). Electronic invitations are sent regularly to the area university international offices, neighbors, colleagues, and others. These events have become quite popular with an average of 30 to 40 people per event and more than 10 countries and five continents often represented.

We also started Friday Nite Forums to which the community is invited. Usually held every two months, the forums deal with world issues, and participants can discuss practical ways they can address these issues. A third step has been adapting our worship, music, art, and imagery to represent a more diverse picture of God and Christianity (including rhythm instruments from different cultures, banners and welcome signs in different languages, and decor from "A Greater Gift/SERRV").

We continue our journey of intentional diversification so that we can be a more complete community, experiencing the many faces and races of God. On any given Sunday, we now have around 30-35 worshipers from four or five different countries. Each week we thank God for the new voices, accents, languages, traditions, music, and liturgy from around the world and in our backyard. We believe we are closer to God than ever.—Kate Spire and Darla Kay Deardorff



Members of the Peace Covenant congregation in Durham, N.C., here enjoying a birthday party, have been intentionally seeking to build a more diverse membership.

Northeast The third annual Church of the Brethren Home Charitable Trust Golf Invitational will be held Sept. 10 at Bedford (Pa.) Springs Resort. Proceeds from the event benefit residents of the Church of the Brethren Home, which provides over \$750,000 in charitable care each year. ... Camp Blue Diamond will host Middle Pennsylvania District's Heritage Fair Sept. 29. The fair is an annual event to raise money for the camp, Heifer International, and other ministries.

Southeast West Marva District held a second annual Youth Rally in the Park on Aug. 18 in Augusta, W.Va. The event was to feature bands, speakers, and dramas. ... The 18th annual World Hunger Bike Ride was held June 16. The ride started at the Antioch (Va.) church and went for 5, 10, 25, or 50 miles.

Midwest Congregations in Michigan and Northern Ohio were invited to attend a workshop on service evangelism June 9 in Toledo, Ohio. Duane Grady, a member of the General Board Congregational Life Team, led the workshop. ... Michigan District conference was held Aug. 10-12 in Hastings. Tim Harvey, pastor of Roanoke (Va.) Central Church of the Brethren, was the conference speaker. ... Dixon (Ill.) Church of the Brethren's witness commission sponsored a pork chop cookout fundraiser for disaster relief June 2, with a tool trailer and disaster response information on display.

Ozarks/Plains Northern Plains District conference was held at South Waterloo (Iowa) Church of the Brethren Aug. 3-4. The moderator was Jerry Waterman, from the Iowa River congregation. ... Children's Disaster Services sent a team to Greensburg, Kan., to assist with disaster relief after a highly destructive tornado swept through the area. The storm was the first to be classified F-5, the highest intensity for a tornado, since 1999.

West Lacey (Wash.) Community Church is celebrating 100 years of ministry by giving 100 gifts. Each month from June through November the congregation will highlight a particular outreach and define a gift to present to neighboring ministries in the community. ... Oregon/Washington District organized a team to volunteer July 8-14 in Pearl River, La. The area experienced significant flooding and wind damage from Hurricane Katrina and requires a wide range of repair, demolition, and clean-up work.



Music is often mentioned as one of the highlights of church life and worshipping together. What is your favorite hymn and why?

Send your answer—please keep it brief—to MESSENGER at messenger@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Selected submissions will be published in a future issue.

BY THE NUMBERS

41

The number of victories earned by the Juniata women's volleyball team this past year en route to winning the NCAA Division III National Championship. On May 14, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed Rep. Bill Shuster's resolution to honor the team. Juniata had a final record of 41-1, matching the program record for fewest losses.

Skippack congregation honors local students' peace efforts

Skippack Church of the Brethren, Collegeville, Pa., presented its 2007 Skippack Peace Award to Preston Faulkner, recognizing "his commitment towards peace and social justice throughout his high school years."

The annual award is a scholarship of \$500 presented to a senior at Perkiomen Valley High School. Faulkner, who was selected by the school, received the peace award as part of the school's Seniors Award Program in May.

Money for the scholarships comes from the "Pennies for Peace" campaign hosted by the Skippack congregation. It has awarded more than \$5,000 over the past seven years. Coins are collected throughout the year and throughout the community.

In presenting the award to Faulkner, Skippack pastor Larry O'Neill said, "The world shall always need its scientists, its doctors, its political and business leaders, but we must also learn to recognize the peacemakers, and Preston is a 'peacemaker.' "



Perkiomen Valley High School student Preston Faulkner, left, receives the 2007 peace award from Skippack pastor Larry O'Neill.



Submitted

Brethren minister Jared Long has found an ecumenical calling on the rim of the Grand Canyon.

Brethren minister finds a truly 'grand' calling

For Jared Long, a love for the outdoors and a passion for ministry came together last November, when he started as pastor of Grand Canyon (Ariz.) Community Church.

Jared was raised in the Church of the Brethren and ordained for ministry in 2006. He served for several years at Camp Swatara as a high ropes instructor, photographer, board member, and adventure camp leader. It was there that he found an interest in outdoor ministries.

Jared served as youth pastor at Akron (Pa.) Church of the Brethren for three years, but kept looking for another form of ministry. "I knew that wasn't specifically my calling," Jared said. He began looking for a job in outdoor ministry, and through that search found an organization called A Christian Ministry in the

National Parks (ACMNP), which places teams in national parks to lead worship services and build relationships.

ACMNP sent Jared to the Grand Canyon, where he was to serve for a year as staff coordinator for the summer ministries and as assistant to the community church's minister, who had undergone serious surgery and needed some help. In August 2006, however, the pastor decided to retire, and Jared found himself in the right place at the right time to fill their need for a new pastor. The church offered Jared the position, and after a month of prayer he accepted.

"I never foresaw myself being the pastor of a church," Jared said. "I never saw myself in that role." Jared's experience at Grand Canyon Community Church has some similarities with traditional pastoral positions, but there are also differences. For one, the community in the Grand Canyon is made up entirely of people who work there, so there are really no elderly people at the church.

He has found some difficulties working with Grand Canyon Community Church, as with any congregation. "In some ways it's a struggle to be someone raised in the Church of the Brethren," he said. "Sometimes the church has needs that aren't the same as the values I was raised with. Certainly there have been trials, as with any ministry, but it's been a good learning experience."

Overall, though, Jared loves his new role. "There's a great community of people who live here year-round," he said. "It's not a normal church and it's not a normal community, so I don't have to be a normal pastor." —Nick Kauffman

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- Happy 100th birthday to **Clara Metzger**, a long-time member of Bear Creek Church of the Brethren (Dayton, Ohio), who marked her centennial on April 26, and to **Arveda Hartman Pritt** of Keyser (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren, who celebrated on June 14. And **Marion Schaul**, a resident of the Peter Becker Community in Harleysville, Pa., turned 105 on June 5.

- **Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren** (Bradenton, Fla.) celebrated its 30th anniversary as a fellowship on Jan. 28 with guest speakers and musicians, receiving of new members, and an anniversary cake.

- Two Virginia District congregations are reaching milestones this fall: **Rocky Mount (Va.) First Church of the Brethren** celebrated its 50th anniversary on Aug. 12, and **Eden (N.C.) First Church of the Brethren** is marking its 100th anniversary.

- **Camp Bethel**, Fincastle, Va., is observing its 80th anniversary with a celebration day on Sept. 2 and Heritage Day Oct. 6.

- The **Lake Side** church project in Bedford County, Va., dedicated its land Aug. 26 and began official worship services Sept. 9.

• **Vernard Marion Eller**, 79, died June 18 at his home in La Verne, Calif. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and a retired professor of philosophy and religion at the University of La Verne, he was well known beyond church circles for books that used humor and wit to popularize theology and religion. "The primary thrust of my life has been to try to bring into focus four different elements not often seen as even being compatible: a strong Christian commitment; solid thought and scholarship; clear and powerful communication; and true wit and humor," Eller wrote in the February 1980 MESSENGER.

Among the more than 20 titles Eller authored were *The MAD Morality*, *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense Out of Revelation*, and *The Sex Manual for Puritans*. Books published by Brethren Press included *Towering Babble: God's People without God's Word* and *Cleaning Up the Christian Vocabulary*. He was also a prolific contributor to numerous magazines and journals.

Eller earned master's degrees from Bethany Theological Seminary and Northwestern University, and a doctorate from Pacific School of Religion. After completing a bachelor's degree at La Verne, he was called by the Church of the Brethren General Board to be editor of youth publications, serving on staff from 1950 to 1956. In 1958, he began a 34-year career at the University of La Verne (then La Verne College).

He was a founding member and free minister at Fellowship Church of the Brethren in La Verne, which later merged with Pomona (Calif.) Church of the Brethren to become Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren. He served terms of service on the General Board and on the board of Bethany Seminary and was a Brethren delegate to the National Council of Churches.

He is survived by Phyllis Eller, his wife of over 50 years, and three children and three grandchildren. Services were held at Pomona on June 26.

• **Raymond W. Bowman**, first administrator of the "new" Pinecrest Manor retirement community, which replaced the old Brethren Home in Mount Morris, Ill., in the early 1960s, died May 20 in Springfield, Ill. He was 86. Bowman and his family served as Lutheran missionaries during the 1950s in Nigeria. After returning home, he became administrator of the Brethren Home in Mount Morris and soon oversaw construction and development of the home's replacement facility, Pinecrest Manor. He served as administrator of Pinecrest Manor until 1974. He later served as an accountant for the non-profit organization Trees for Life, headquartered in Wichita, Kan.

A NEW CENTURY

A New Vision

prayer ■ skill ■ thought



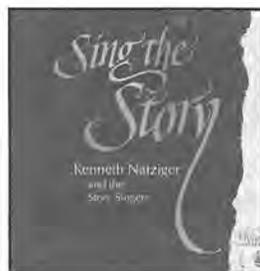
"Bethany is a community where prayer is transformed from ritual to lifestyle: encompassing heart, soul, mind and strength."

Lee Saylor, M.Div. middler

- Bethany seeks to prepare pastors and church leaders who are prayerful in their ministry, skillful in their leadership, and thoughtful about our heritage. Contact us for more information about enrolling as a student or supporting Bethany's mission.



615 National Road West
Richmond, Indiana 47374
800-287-8822
www.bethanyseminary.edu
contactus@bethanyseminary.edu



Sing the Story
Hymnal: A Worship Book Supplement II
Spiral, 208 pages, \$8.99

Sing the Story CD
Kenneth Nafziger and the Story Singers
Features 21 hymns from *Sing the Story*.
CD, \$15.99



Take Our Moments and Our Days
An Anabaptist Prayer Book: Ordinary Time
A four-week cycle of morning and evening prayer services prepared for the period in the church year between Pentecost and Advent. The services focus on the teaching and ministry of Jesus: the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, Jesus' parables, and Jesus' miracles. Second edition 2007. Leatherette with two ribbons, 384 pages, \$22.99



1 800 245-7894 x 278 • www.heraldpress.com

A studied approach to scripture

I should have known it was coming.

Our Sunday school class was a few weeks into a whirlwind trip through the New Testament. This particular week's stop was in the Gospel of John. I had just set up a chart on newsprint comparing John's account with those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke when one statement shattered any further plans I had made for the morning. "I have a problem with all this," he said.



JOSHUA BROCKWAY

Not being one to ignore such statements when I am leading discussions, I asked him to elaborate. "Well, it's just that you can take John's Gospel, translate it into any other language, and it changes lives without having to know any of this stuff."

He had me hooked, and I followed his lead. What came next

was a 20-minute defense of biblical studies as a general practice and as a spiritual discipline. I felt like I was defending my schoolwork from the past five years, and he felt I was uncritically translating academic jargon right into the congregation. We were like the proverbial ships passing in the night, and we continued to pass each other for another 20 minutes after worship.

My next two days, however, were spent wrestling with a simple question: Why do I think it is so important for everyone, especially pastors, to study the Bible?

tions. Yet I also believe a calling is not the end of the pastoral work. It takes more than a good person and a Bible to minister to God's people.

As I reflected I kept returning to the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), especially the closing phrase, "For to all who have, more will be given, and they will have in abundance" (25:29). Being graced with the gifts for ministry, as we all are, is only the beginning to the Christian life. Each gift should be tended and nurtured to its fullest aptitude.

To venture off having just read the Gospel of John and experienced its life-changing capacity to lead the people of God seems to commit the sin of the last servant in the parable. The first, conversion-bringing reading of the Bible is simply the first of many; a member of the kingdom of God ought to have many such encounters with the text through continuous study.

In such epiphanies the gifts for service are continuously honed and grown through deep encounters with God's revelation. Then those seedling gifts, by taking time out to study, are nurtured into useable fruits for the kingdom work.

Looking back at our Sunday morning squabble I wish I had been quick enough to reply with this collection of thoughts. Even so, I look back to that morning as the catalyst for my being able to articulate why I spend so much time preparing for my ministry in the church. How else could I have encountered the breadth and intricacies of the Bible and the invaluable skill of conversing with peo-

The first, conversion-bringing reading of the Bible is simply the first of many; a member of the kingdom of God ought to have many such encounters with the text through continuous study.

You see, I am what you might call a professional student. I've just finished my second master's degree, and I'm beginning my Ph.D. program this year. My entire goal in life is to serve the church by helping to prepare pastors for their ministry. Our argument that Sunday morning cut right to the heart of my own sense of call, and I went on the defensive.

I am convinced that God calls everyone to serve the kingdom of God, and calls a few to serve local congrega-

ple called to the same task?

These gifts and so many more arise out of setting aside the time to prepare for service to the kingdom of God. Why study? Simply put, we owe the best we have to the One who called us in the first place. **W**

Joshua Brockway is a graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary and a member of East Nimishillen Church of the Brethren, North Canton, Ohio. He is currently doing a doctoral program at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

“Christ didn’t call for Christians to welcome those strangers whose papers are in order or who speak our language.”

—the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, in an address on migration and globalization

“Participation is a marker of church members’ commitment to live as people of faith.”

—Michele H. Morgan, Episcopal priest, writing in *Giving* magazine

“Fasting is not about self-punishment, it’s about making space for God. We remove something habitual so we can experience something new.”

—author Lynne Baab, in an interview with *The United Methodist Reporter*

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”

—TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey

“Deep change takes time.”

—Western Plains District co-executive Ken Holderread, writing in the district newsletter about a process of congregational transformation

“We would hope that our action is not seen as rebellion or going against authority. It is an act of faithfulness to God.”

—Linford King, bishop of Mennonite Church USA’s Lancaster (Pa.) District in Lancaster Mennonite Conference. The district gave its support to the ordination of a woman minister at James Street Mennonite Church of Lancaster, breaking a conference ban on women’s ordination. (*Mennonite Weekly Review*)

“We believe the impact of global warming will have a disproportionate effect on the world’s poor. We have an obligation to help our brothers and sisters around the world.”

—US National Council of Churches general secretary Bob Edgar, speaking at The Global Roundtable on Climate Change.

CULTUREVIEW

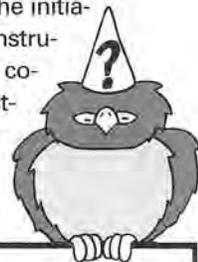
• The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life has unveiled **Religion & Politics '08** (pewforum.org/religion08), a new online resource that features survey findings and religious biographies for both parties’ major presidential candidates.

• An in-depth survey by British charity Tearfund indicated that more than half of Britain’s adults claim to be Christian, but **only one in 10 regularly attends weekly church services**. In 2001, nearly three-quarters of adults identified themselves as Christian. (RNS)

• A Gallup poll found that about three in 10 Americans **believe the Bible is literally true**, a 10 percent drop over the past three decades. About half of respondents said the Bible is the inspired word of God, but that not everything in it should be taken literally.

• **Bob Edgar**, outgoing general secretary of the US National Council of Churches, has been named president of the public interest advocacy group Common Cause. Edgar, 63, a former congressman from Pennsylvania and an ordained United Methodist minister, ends his NCC tenure Dec. 31. He will split time between the two organizations until then, according to representatives.

• A new ecumenical advocacy initiative launched at the culmination of a World Council of Churches conference in Jordan this summer will help churches worldwide work for a **just peace in Palestine/Israel**. Called the “Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum,” the initiative intends to be an instrument to “catalyze and coordinate new and existing church advocacy for peace.”



JUST FOR FUN: TOP 10

THE EDITOR’S PEN This top 10 list was shared by MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek at this year’s Annual Conference MESSENGER Dinner in Cleveland, Ohio.

Top 10 signs that you have been an editor for a long time:

10. Your Bible is full of proofreading marks noting where Paul was a bit redundant and wordy.
9. You’ve refused to go to a wedding simply because the invitation instructed you to “R.V.S.P.”
8. You ask the guy at the McDonald’s cash register to please delete the pickles.
7. Ordering at a restaurant takes forever because you’re too busy going through the menu and picking out spelling errors.
6. Other people time the speakers at the microphone. You keep a tally of incorrect grammar usages.
5. You name your pets “Open Parenthesis” and “Close Parenthesis.” Then every time you call them you joke that it’s a parenthetical reference.
4. After worship, you provide your pastor with a transcript showing how the essential content of the 30-minute sermon could have been delivered in 10. Maybe five.
3. When you hear a friend is having a colonoscopy, the first thing you think of is punctuation.
2. Your shelf contains a guide on proper proofreading marks for heiroglyphics.
1. The country song “Who’s Cheating Who” comes on the radio and the first thing you think of is to yell “Whom!” “It’s who’s cheating WHOM!” Then you realize that probably shouldn’t be your first concern.

2007 Annual Conference



Regina Roberts



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Delegates usher in changes

Medical Plan, agency structure face shake-up in coming months

Delegates faced a lengthy and complex business agenda at this year's Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

In one major item of unfinished business, the Conference approved phasing out the Brethren Medical Plan's medical insurance component for active ministers. The health insurance coverage will be phased out no sooner than Dec. 31. Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT), which administers the plan, will work to assist affected ministers in finding alternate coverage.

The decision came as delegates approved a report of the Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee, appointed in 2005 by Annual Conference. BBT called for the study, announcing that the plan was in a "death spiral" of decreased membership, erosion of a good spread of risk, and increased health care costs and premiums.

The plan has offered health insurance for pastors, church employees, district employees, employees of Conference agencies and affiliated agencies and institutions, and their families.

The committee recommended that BBT phase out medical insurance for ministers and retirees, while continuing to explore viability of the plan for agencies, which have 100-percent plan participation, and continuing to offer long-term disability, life, vision, and dental insurance.

The report was approved with two changes: that BBT include "members of the ministers' group who are currently retired or retire in the future and who are age 65 or older" as it explores viability of the plan for agency employees, and that BBT "mutually assist in finding" alternate medical coverage for current participants.

In addition to the Brethren Medical Plan, the following business was addressed:

Intercultural Study Committee report: The report was adopted. Based on the words of Revelation 7:9, the report engages the denomination in intentional steps to become intercultural. Changes are prescribed for all levels of the church, including making intercultural inclusion a part of vision statements, hiring processes, and continuing education for ministers, and agency staff. It also calls for reporting intercultural ministry progress at the 2010 Annual Conference, providing more denominational materials that are intercultural and available in other languages, increasing the intercultural components of seminary education, and establishing a "full-time, funded specialist position" within the General Board to "facilitate intercultural activity." A new General Board Congregational Life Team position focusing on intercultural



(Photos, from left to right)

Jeff Carter, pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, preaches the opening sermon for the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland.

Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, addresses a panel discussion during a panel discussion with leaders of the five Conference agencies and the district executives.

Lines are long at Conference microphones, as delegates and others wait to speak to the many items of business.

Irene Beltran of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren takes her turn at the microphone during a business session.

ministries was posted soon after Conference.

Review and Evaluation Committee report: Delegates adopted the 10 recommendations of the report. The first recommendation merges the General Board and the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC) into an entity called "The Church of the Brethren," with the new board also replacing the roles and functions of the General Board and the Annual Conference Council, uniting them into a single body. An amendment struck "USA" from the end of the name of the new entity. The recommendation also encourages On Earth Peace to join. The Conference named an implementation committee: the executives of the General Board, ABC, On Earth Peace, and Annual Conference, and elected members Gary Crim, John Neff, and David Sollenberger. "We're really looking forward to a new day," said Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, who called the move a way to be "together in a new way." Other recommendations include lifting up evangelism and stewardship education, examining and enhancing orientation for those serving in elected leadership roles, promoting the "core values of the church," holding discussion on whether to have Annual Conference biennially, and being more welcoming "toward diversities of all types."

Doing Church Business Study Committee report: The report, which contains numerous proposals related to preparation/training of delegates, increased discernment and discussion options during business sessions, and the format of Annual Conference itself, was received "as a resource and study informa-

ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Following are the elections and appointments made by the 2007 Annual Conference, listed by position:

Annual Conference moderator-elect: David K. Shumate

Annual Conference secretary: Fred W. Swartz

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: Sarah B. Steele

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory

Committee: Peter C. Kaltenbaugh Jr.

Committee on Interchurch Relations: James O. Eikenberry

Association of Brethren Caregivers board: J. Colleen Michael. The appointments of Marilyn E. Bussey, Wayne T. Scott, James L. Tiffin, and Chris Whitacre were affirmed.

Bethany Theological Seminary board, representing colleges: Carol A. Scheppard; *representing clergy:* Lisa L. Hazen. The appointments of Martha Farahat and Connie Rutt were affirmed.

Brethren Benefit Trust board: Deborah E. Romary. The appointments of Janice Bratton and Ann Quay Davis were affirmed.

General Board, at large: Terrell Lewis. The appointments of Frances Townsend (Michigan District), Dan Petry (Northern Indiana), and John Moyers (West Marva) were affirmed.

On Earth Peace board: Susan Chapman. The appointments of Doris Abdullah and Don Mitchell were affirmed.

2007 Annual Conference



The 2007 Conference moderator, Belita Mitchell, poses with her husband, Don, in front of the logo banner.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

Where and when: Cleveland (Ohio) Convention Center, June 30-July 4

Registration: 3,578, including 831 delegates and 2,747 non-delegates.

New congregations welcomed: Harvest Fellowship, Wabash, Ind.; Latino Community Brethren Church Fellowship, Fresno, Calif.; Community of Joy, Salisbury, Md.

Blood drive: Brethren gave 187 units of blood over three days.

Quilt auction: The auction of quilts, wall hangings, and an autographed 300th anniversary calendar raised \$7,558.58 for hunger. It was sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren.

Awards: This year's Committee on Interchurch Relations Ecumenical Citations went to Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren and Anna Buckwalter of Conestoga Church of the Brethren, Leola, Pa.; The Association of Brethren Caregivers gave Caregiving Recognitions to Jefferson Crosby of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Tim Hissong (awarded posthumously) of the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, and John Wenger of Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren and the Open Roof Award to Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Outdoor Ministries Association awards went to Andrew Levin of Camp Myrtlewood (staff of the year award), Joe Henderson of Camp Carmel (awarded posthumously), and Frank and Barbara Hart of Camp Peaceful Pines (volunteer of the year).

Brethren Benefit Trust Fitness Challenge: Top finishers in the 5K walk/run were Jerry Crouse (male runner, 18:37), Katherine O' Donnell (female runner, 22:13), Don Shankster (male walker, 33:09), and Bev Anspaugh (female walker, 33:09).

Date change: New dates of June 27-July 1, 2009, were announced for the Annual Conference to be held in San Diego, Calif.

Brethren greet Sgt. Maj. Coral E. Gillham following an insight session in which he and Christian Peacemaker Teams member Peggy Gish spoke about Iraq. The session was sponsored by On Earth Peace.

tion" and "as possible options for future Annual Conferences" as part of an amended recommendation made from the floor. The item had been continued from 2006, after referral to the Program Feasibility Committee for study of the financial implications.

Christian Churches Together: A recommendation that the Church of the Brethren become a full participant in Christian Churches Together (CCT) was approved. CCT began to take shape about six years ago 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) or the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Brethren have been involved in the group's conversations since its beginning, and a group of Brethren attended the inaugural meeting of CCT as observers this past spring.

Query: Reverse Membership Trend: A lengthy recommendation from Standing Committee was adopted. The query called for solutions to the denomination's declining membership. The answer refers to the Great Commission, points to a 1981 study "Diminishing Membership in the Church of the Brethren," and recommends actions to be taken by congregations, districts, and church agencies. Areas emphasized include evangelism, sharing stories, celebrating success, and providing mentoring and coaching opportunities.

Query: Child Abuse Prevention: The concerns of the query, which seeks follow-up on earlier Conference actions related to this topic, were referred to the Association of Brethren Caregivers.

Query: Annual Conference Schedule: Concerns of the query, which was prompted by the financial burden of holding a major annual meeting and by the rise of new communication technology, were accepted and passed on to the Annual Conference leadership, recognizing "that Annual Conference officers and committees are already working at this issue."

Update to Annual Conference Polity: A recommendation for a change in the rotation of locations for Annual Conference, to increase attendance by holding the meeting more often in the East and Midwest, nearer the center of Brethren population, was approved. The plan places Conference in the East and Midwest four times each in a 12-year cycle rather than the previous three times each.

Adjustment to the cash salary table for pastors: A 2.7-percent increase for 2008 was adopted, as presented by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee. A group of ministers came forward during the committee's report to express concern about the phasing out of health insurance. Chair Linda Frey Barkdoll pledged the committee's support. "We would urge delegates and everyone present to support pastors and their families," she said. "It is critical that health insurance is offered." ❧

This report was prepared by the Annual Conference news team coordinated by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

Glenn Riegel



Sarah Kovacs



Ken Menner

(above) The *On Earth Peace* report featured witty repartee' between Esther Frey and James Myer.

(left) Conference offered opportunities for youth from across the country to meet. Shown here are Katelyn Carothers of the Circle of Peace congregation in Arizona, Amy Eldredge of the Maitland church in Pennsylvania, Mycal Gresh of the Denton (Md.) church, David Manthos of the Welty church in Maryland, Rebekah Wheatley of the Long Green Valley congregation in Maryland, and Megan Zellers of York (Pa.) Madison Avenue.

“It’s hard not to have a relationship with someone who keeps telling you they like you!”

—Jim Myer of Manheim, Pa., speaking to Esther Fry of Mount Morris, Ill., in a dialogue during the *On Earth Peace* report. The two friends, who served on Standing Committee together, have very different theological viewpoints.

Getting ‘Together’ by Nick Miller Kauffman

Conversation process nears culmination

Among happenings at Annual Conference this year was a report on some preliminary results of “**Together: Conversations on Being the Church,**” a discussion process that has taken place for well over a year. Originally envisioned at a Council of District Executives meeting in early 2003, the Together process was organized by the Council of District Executives and Annual Conference, as well as all five Annual Conference agencies.

Mark Flory-Steuery, Southern Ohio’s district executive, was among those present when Together was born. “The concern is that often times at Conference we would get together and try to fight things out on the Conference floor, and [we had] the feeling that we need to spend more time in conversation together instead of doing battle with each other,” Flory-Steuery said.

Together is not the first “conversation on being the church” that the Brethren have had. Similar conversations took place almost 50 years ago, but were not as widespread as Together. “We decided that it was time to have the conversation again, and this time we wanted to involve the entire church in the conversation,” Flory-Steuery said.

The Together process was officially launched in 2005, and there was an initial conversation in New Windsor, Md., in February 2006 with representatives from all 23 districts. Since then, conversations and events have taken place across the denomination, encouraging Brethren to chime in with their perceptions, thoughts, hopes, and concerns about who we are as a church. Most districts trained “Listening Teams” to help spark conversation and take notes on themes that came up at district events, and conversations also took place at National Older Adult Conference and National Youth Conference in 2006.

Thousands participated in the conversations, sounding off on the importance of acceptance and caring in local congregations,

the value of traditional Church of the Brethren practices, changes observed in congregations and the denomination, and hopes and concerns about the state of the church, both now and in the future.

“People have had very meaningful conversations within their districts, as well as within their congregations,” Flory-Steuery said. “Our original concern was fragmentation—I think there is fragmentation when people don’t talk to each other. And when we talk, even though we don’t agree on everything, we still see the value in being together and being in conversation.”

General Board Ministry director Mary Jo Flory-Steuery, along with Virlina District executive David Shumate, gave a brief report highlighting the success of the Together process during Tuesday’s afternoon business meeting at Annual Conference. The Together steering committee continued to seek input as it prepared for a fall meeting to discuss the results of the conversations and consider next steps in the conversation. It is encouraging Brethren to keep thinking and talking about what it means to be a part of the Church of the Brethren, as well as the larger body of Christ.

“Both the planning committee and the district executives see this as a first step in a continuing conversation,” Mark Flory-Steuery said. “[Our goal is] not to bring up new queries or decisions, but to bring about conversation. How do we have good conversations again?”

Nick Miller Kauffman is a junior at Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind., currently studying in Mexico. A member of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren, he worked with MESSENGER through the General Board’s Ministry Summer Service program this past summer.



Regina Roberts

Mary Jo Flory-Steuery and David Shumate give a presentation on the Together conversations.

2007 Annual Conference



Regina Roberts



Steffi Fieggl

The Antioch Baptist Church Adult Ensemble sings for the opening worship of the 2007 Conference.

Moderator Belita Mitchell lights the candle on the worship center.

One body in Christ by Walt Wiltschek **Conference worship embodies a call for diversity**

Manassas (Va.) pastor Jeff Carter plays with dolls. It's true. He admitted it right on the Annual Conference stage.

Carter was concluding his opening worship message Saturday evening in Cleveland when he stepped away from the pulpit and broke out his daughters' set of Russian stacking dolls. He confessed that sometimes, while he's picking up the scattered dolls at home at night, he gives them names.

Likewise, he suggested, we give each other names—labels—that highlight our differences: conservative or liberal, evangelical or pentecostal, and so on. But just as the dolls all fit inside each other to form one unit, so the church fits together as one body.

"When assembled, we are one," Carter noted. He put the last three dolls together with the phrases "Inspired by the Spirit, led by Christ, embraced by God."

It was a vivid image to begin a week filled with calls to bring down walls and extend the boundaries. Cultural and musical diversity permeated the five Conference worship services, amid visions of the scene from Revelation 7:9 when every "nation, tribe, people, and language" stand before the Lamb of God.

Another colorful scene unfolded Monday evening, when preacher Duane Grady of the General Board's Congregational Life Teams invited the large congregation to wave brightly colored bandanas as a symbol of blessing and challenge.

"A church made up of people only like ourselves is weak and limited and shallow," Grady said.

The bandanas reappeared at the Wednesday morning closing worship, when people representing the breadth of the church's diversity waved them as they walked down the aisles and brought the colorful cloth pieces to be part of the worship center.

That morning's speaker, Ataloa Woodin of Fresno, Calif., called Brethren to notice the people "in the background of our lives." "God wants to empower us to be able to love them," she said, relating the story of her congregation's ministry to a homeless

man who showed up one Sunday with numerous dogs in tow.

Moderator Belita Mitchell, the first black female to serve in the denomination's highest elected position, said from the outset that she wanted this Conference to have a welcoming and intercultural flavor. She and her husband, Don, wore traditional Nigerian garb at times during the week, reminders of their first trip to Africa this past spring and their visits with Brethren in Nigeria.

In her Sunday morning sermon, Mitchell—pastor of Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren—emphasized the need for prayer throughout the church's ministries. "A prayerless church is a dying church," she said, "and the longer a church fails to pray, the faster they're going to disintegrate and no longer be recognizable as a church."

Rounding out the week's speakers was Tim Harvey, pastor of Roanoke (Va.) Central Church of the Brethren and newly called General Board chair. Harvey's focus was on evangelism, using the story of the woman at the well in Samaria (as Grady did the evening before) to illustrate the connections Jesus made. "The first task of the church is to invite other people to follow Jesus," he said.

Around the sermons, worship also featured rich music planned by music coordinator Joseph Helfrich and an Annual Conference choir. The choir set the auditorium rocking on the final morning with the upbeat anthem "When the Holy Ghost Shows Up." Worship had begun Saturday in a similar spirit, with soulful special music from Cleveland's Antioch Baptist Church. Drama, video clips, candlelighting, prayer, a variety of scriptures (sometimes in multiple languages), and other elements completed the services.

As the last worship time in Cleveland ended, Belita Mitchell summed up the essence of the week in her words of benediction: "We declare that from this day forward we will not be the same." 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER.

WORDS OF WORSHIP

It's better to look weird and be alive than it is to be comatose and normal. —Ataloo Woodin, Wednesday morning Conference worship speaker



Glenn Riegel

The time has come for us to no longer be patient with prejudice. —Duane Grady, Monday evening Conference worship speaker



Glenn Riegel

Our unity is not found in our politics.... Rather, our unity is truly found in Christ.

—Jeff Carter, Saturday evening Conference worship speaker



Regina Roberts

If we want to do the work of God, we must realize the power of God. —Moderator Belita Mitchell, Sunday morning Conference worship speaker



Glenn Riegel

If we don't feel compassion for the pain and suffering of other persons, we might want to do a heart-check of our own. —Tim Harvey, Tuesday evening Conference worship speaker



Regina Roberts

This year I challenge you to share your faith. Pay attention to special windows of opportunity.

—2008 Annual Conference moderator Jim Beckwith, following his consecration during worship on Wednesday morning



Regina Roberts

Happy anniversary!

by Nick Miller Kauffman

Denomination's 300th birthday celebration is under way

For almost seven years now the Annual Conference Anniversary Committee has been hard at work planning ways to commemorate 300 years of Brethrenism. Called by Standing Committee in 2000 and first meeting late that year, Jeff Bach (current chair), Rhonda Pittman Gingrich (recorder), Dean Garrett, Leslie Lake, and Lorele Yager have been hard at work ever since.

They've gone through their share of trials and transitions, too: Don Durnbaugh was originally on the committee, as well, but he passed away in 2005. Also, Annual Conference executive director Duane Steiner was replaced by Lerry Fogle as the committee's ex officio after Steiner retired.

Much of the early work of the committee was just brainstorming. "A large part of our work since 2000 was coming up with ideas and filtering out the ideas that we thought might be most useful and most workable," Bach said. The committee also moved quickly to approach the Brethren Church (Ashland, Ohio) and invite them to take part in celebrations.

Among other things, the committee has had a presence at

National Youth Conference, National Older Adult Conference, and Annual Conference in recent years, and as the church enters its 300th year they were especially hard at work in Cleveland this year. They hosted an insight session ("299 Years and Counting") Sunday night at Conference, during which they highlighted many of the projects they've been working on and some upcoming events. They also gave a report to the delegate body Tuesday emphasizing similar themes.

At the Sunday night session, attendees heard from members of the Youth Heritage Travel Teams, a joint project between the Anniversary Committee and the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministries office that has two youth each from 21 of the 23 districts. They also played a Brethren trivia game, got an overview of some of the resources available, previewed some upcoming events, and watched a segment from a DVD.

The first major event taking place in the anniversary year is this month's opening celebration in Germantown, Pa., Sept. 15-16. (Pre-registration is needed for this event due to limited

2007 Annual Conference



Nick Kauffman

The 300th Anniversary Committee holds an insight session on plans for the upcoming celebration. Shown here are committee members (from left) Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, chair Jeff Bach, Leslie Lake, and Dean Garrett.

space; registration brochure is at www.churchofthebrethrenanniversary.org/germantown.htm.) That Saturday night Coventry Church of the Brethren (near Pottstown, Pa.) will host a hymn singing that can be attended by those at Germantown (an hour to an hour and a half away) and by those unable to attend the Germantown celebration. The schedule for the main event includes meals, children's activities, a historical simulation, cemetery tours, various workshops and presentations, and Sunday morning and afternoon worship services.

Another event coming up soon is "Honoring a Legacy, Embracing a Future: Three Hundred Years of Brethren Heritage," an academic conference hosted by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College Oct. 11-13. The conference will feature sessions and presentations on a variety of topics, including ministry, mission history, Anabaptism, Pietism, peace, service, and more. Various speakers will be present covering a wide variety of topics related to Brethren past, present, and future. Plenary speakers include Carl Bowman, Chris Bucher, Stewart Hoover, Richard T. Hughes, Marcus Meier, and Dale Stoffer.

The high point of the anniversary year will be the 2008 Annual Conference in Richmond, Va., July 12-16. Some worship services at that conference will be held jointly with the Brethren Church and will feature speakers from both denominations. Additionally, Sunday, July 13, will see a break from the usual Conference schedule as members of both denominations share box lunches and enjoy musical and educational activities throughout the afternoon, followed by a celebration highlighting international dimensions of both groups of Brethren.

Wednesday will be a joint closing worship, and the Church of the Brethren will conduct its business on Monday and Tuesday.

Still later in 2008 will be another celebration, this one taking place in Schwarzenau, Germany, Aug. 3, and planned by the Brethren Encyclopedia board. While not involved in planning this event, the Anniversary Committee is encouraging Brethren congregations to have their own celebrations that day and develop their own ways of commemorating it. Tours will also be

taking place in Germany, stopping in Schwarzenau in time for the celebration. The celebration is a part of the fourth Brethren World Assembly, which will be held Aug. 2-3 in Schwarzenau.

In addition to all the events planned, several resources have been released related to the anniversary. Possibly the most popular is *Fresh from the Word*, a devotional book published by Brethren Press with contributions from many Brethren authors (from six Schwarzenau Brethren denominations). The book officially starts with Jan. 1, 2008, but many people are already using it, and it is designed to be used over and over regardless of the year. Brethren Press has also put out a DVD by David Sollenberger called "Faith Alive," which shows Brethren ministry and mission at work today across the denomination.

Yet another anniversary-related resource is a curriculum written by Jean Moyer and Joanne Thurston Griswold called "Piecing Together the Brethren Way," a 14-lesson unit designed to be a quarter's Sunday school curriculum, but also able to be shortened for Vacation Bible School or other briefer events. The curriculum includes a CD with songs by Andy and Terri Murray that relate to the lessons. The curriculum is also available through Brethren Press.

In addition to all that, the Anniversary Committee, in collaboration with the Brethren Church, published a 300th anniversary calendar featuring current photographs of many historic Brethren sites. The calendar was first displayed at the 2007 Annual Conference, though it was available before that, and all copies sold out (the Anniversary Committee has no plans to produce more).

Finally, Steve Longenecker and Jeff Bach are co-editing a collection of scholarly essays related to Brethren history and life, a project co-sponsored by the six Brethren colleges and Bethany Theological Seminary. The book is expected to be in print by the 2008 Annual Conference.

The work of the committee has been long, and it's not done yet. But there's a lot of road behind them, and every now and then they stop to look back on all they've done.

"I want to give a great big thank you to the five [Annual Conference] agencies," Bach said. "This past year they committed to make up whatever funds we still needed to meet our budget. They have given money for the last three years to help us, and we're very grateful to them. They've made it possible for us to go ahead and complete the things we envisioned doing. It's financial support, but it's also a commitment of their encouragement to see the anniversary happen." 

Nick Miller Kauffman is a junior at Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind., and a member of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren. He worked with MESSENGER through the General Board's Ministry Summer Service program this past summer.

LEARN MORE

With 300 years of history to celebrate, this article only scratches the surface! For more information about the resources, events, and preparations related to the denomination's anniversary, visit the Anniversary Committee website at www.churchofthebrethrenanniversary.org or call 800-688-5186. To order *Fresh from the Word*, "Faith Alive," or "Piecing Together the Brethren Way," visit the Brethren Press store at www.brethrenpress.com or call 800-441-3712.



Glenn Riegel

Simply AMAZING

by Twyla Rowe

First National Junior High Conference brings inspiration

It was the church of the recent past, the church of the present, and the church of the future that converged on the peaceful summer campus of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. About 800 junior high youth and their advisors came from places like California, Washington, Kansas, Virginia, Maryland, and the Dominican Republic to worship, learn, and play together. The sanctuary of Leffler Chapel filled with energy and noise as they gathered for worship; but soon the piano music broke through the commotion, the noise transformed to sweet song, and worship began.

It was the beginning of the first-ever Church of the Brethren National Junior High Conference that brought these youth together on the Elizabethtown campus the weekend of June 15-17. The conference was planned by the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministries office led by Chris Douglas, who was assisted by a steering committee of Rebecca Houff, Sarah Yingling, Diana Rock, David Steele, and Georgia Markey. The

youth gathered under the theme "The Amazing Race: Continuing the Work of Jesus," based on the familiar scripture from Luke 9:23: "If any want to become my followers, let them take up their cross daily and follow me."

Elizabethtown College church relations director Allen Hansell brought a welcome to the youth on behalf of the college, and captured the atmosphere in the room when he joked, "I wish you had some energy and enthusiasm!" Moderator Belita Mitchell also brought greetings on behalf of the denomination and encouraged them to attend Annual Conference.

Music for the entire conference was led by Ken Medema, who also performed a concert after worship on Saturday evening. Youth were amazed by his ability to create new songs on the spot. His musical stories spoke to them about issues and experiences they understand.

The guest speaker for Friday evening's opening service was Tony Campolo. Campolo caught the attention of the youth with



Glenn Riegel

As a response to an invitation to give, participants at the National Junior High Conference bring forward health kits and place them in front of the cross. The offering received a total of 984 kits to be used in disaster relief efforts.

The Saturday morning worship experience began with a song written by Medema, based on the story of Zaccheus. The words from the song, "I'm being changed for God," set the mood for worship.

Comedy duo Ted & Lee had been scheduled to bring the that morning until the unexpected death of Lee Eshleman a few weeks earlier. Instead, Douglas talked to the youth briefly about the issue of suicide, and a video on the feeding of the 5,000 performed by Ted & Lee was shown, followed by moments of silence in memory of Lee.

David Radcliff of New Community Project received the urgent invitation while he was on a trip to the South American rainforest to fill in and share the message Saturday morning. He accepted, so the

youth heard another high-energy, powerful, and thought-provoking message. Radcliff began with the reminder, "There's nothing like knowing people care. We all want people to care."

Many times those who most need someone to care are ignored because they might seem strange to others, he said. Too many Christians don't want to look strange for doing the right thing, but, Radcliff said, "The strange people may (actually) be those who ignore the cause . . . the right thing." He challenged the

Glenn Riegel



his natural energy and storytelling, pointing out that the people around us seem to determine who is "neat" and who is not. He challenged them to ignore that judgment, and rather to do what Jesus would do towards everyone.

"The kingdom is a party," Campolo said, "and Jesus said he wants his kingdom to be a party for those who never go to a party." The youth heard that as followers of Christ, they can bring people to the party. Campolo encouraged the youth with three points: to get a good education, not for the purpose of making money, but in order to serve others; to reach out to the poor; and to make a commitment to spend the rest of their lives serving people in the name of Jesus.

(above) In a worship drama, a student prays the Lord's Prayer while taking a break from homework. He is startled when God begins conversing with him about the prayer, challenging conference participants to consider their own relationship to prayer.

(left) Some junior high groups visit Hersheypark in Pennsylvania and other attractions before arriving at Elizabethtown College for the conference.



Glenn Riegel

National Junior High Conference

youth by telling them a movement is needed, and it starts with people like them.

"Show us the way!" he said. "It's inside of you ... continuing the work of Jesus. It's in your blood. You know this. You know what to do. You can change the world. So run for your life. Run with your eyes on Jesus ... chasing the right thing ... and take us where we need to be."

The youth moved from the sanctuary to the athletic fields, where they met other youth from across the denomination to play some get-acquainted games in a sea of activity and laughter.

In the afternoon youth were required to attend two workshops, choosing from a wide variety of options that included Brethren history, spirituality, conflict resolution, peace, money, treating your body as a temple, or hands-on projects like making prayer bracelets or crafts designed to serve others.

Saturday evening worship was a collage of video clips about a variety of denominational outreach projects, such as the Global Food Crisis Fund, workcamps, health and school kits, and Emergency Disaster Response work. A powerful clowning drama challenged youth to think about their offerings to God: whether simply putting money in a plate each Sunday is enough, or if we can give more by offering ourselves to God for service. An offering of health kits collected on the stage created a mountain that came to a grand total of 984 kits. A monetary offering of about \$2,500, to be used to make more kits, was also collected.

As if that scene was not inspiring enough, the final worship featured Medema sharing the message through musical storytelling. He first asked the question, "What did you imagine as a child?" designed to help the youth think about using their imagination for God's purposes. Medema created and sang songs with the stories that youth told about their imagi-

Frisbee games and other recreation were part of the conference experience for the junior high youth.

Glenn Riegel



On Sunday morning, the junior high conference is led in worship by Christian musician Ken Medema. Participants shared stories about times when they have seen signs of "God country" or the kingdom of God in their congregations and life experiences.

nations. Then Medema asked, "What drives you to what you hope to be and hope to do?" Again youth shared several stories, and Medema sang about them.

Finally he asked, "Where do you see signs of God-life? What things are your churches doing to bring God's world to our world?" It did not take long for the youth to line up at the single microphone to share, in a few words, what their churches

are doing. Youth mentioned things like soup kitchens, Two-Cents-a-Meal, sponsoring children in poor countries, handing out food, Heifer International, offerings, workcamps, fellowship ... the list went on and on. It was an amazing sight.

The first National Junior High Conference was an incredible event. Youth had every opportunity to be motivated to seek a deeper relationship with Christ. The Spirit poured out God's love to bless them with an awareness that they are valuable and honored individuals, empowered to use their gifts for service. The whole denomination can celebrate their enthusiasm and interest in serving others.

But better yet, we can join hands with them "to reach out to those who never go to the party," and work side by side with them to help build God's kingdom. **W**

Twyla Rowe is associate pastor of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren.

Glenn Riegel



Jonah: *The perfect prophet*

Story moves from reluctance to action to anger

by Eugene F. Roop

I am sure very few readers of **MESSENGER** pick Jonah as their favorite prophet. We may identify with Jonah's problems: The prophet's reluctance to accept God's call may remind us of our own reluctance. Jonah's anger connects with people or groups who inflame our emotions. The storm-tossed ship in chapter 1, the big fish in chapter 2, and the sack-clothed citizens of Nineveh in chapter 3 make Jonah a fun story for children to draw and to re-enact. Adults, however, seldom pay much attention to this "troubled" prophet.

Assyrian brutality in the poetry of Israel's prophets.

Following Jonah's decision to "go down" to Joppa after God directed him to "rise up," the scene shifts to a storm-battered ship on the sea. The sailors panic while Jonah sleeps. Our "hero" eventually wakes up and directs the sailors to toss him overboard, promising them God would quiet the storm. Reluctant to take Jonah's life, the sailors try to row back to land. Eventually they toss Jonah overboard and the storm quiets. The scene concludes with the sailors giving thanks to the Lord, while Jonah

goes, but only partway into the huge city, not even making it to "city center." Jonah speaks five words (in Hebrew). The whole city believed God and began a ritual of repentance. After the citizens had begun the ritual, the king finally proclaimed a fast! Be that as it may, God responded to the people's repentance and changed his mind, deciding not to bring the proposed disaster.

With that, this narrative is over. The narrative tension established in 1:1-3 has been joyfully resolved. Joyful for God and Nineveh perhaps, but not for Jonah. Chapter 4 finds Jonah angry, enraged

COULD A RITUAL OF REPENTANCE, NO MATTER HOW SINCERE, WIPE OUT TWO CENTURIES OF CRUEL CONQUEST AND OCCUPATION? WHAT WAS JONAH, PROPHET OF DIVINE JUSTICE, TO SAY TO INFANTS LEFT TO DIE OF EXPOSURE OR STARVATION, TO MOTHERS CRYING FOR THEIR LOST CHILDREN, TO GIRLS VIOLATED BY A "HUNGRY" ARMY, TO MEN EXECUTED BECAUSE OF THEIR ETHNICITY?

Surprisingly, our ancestors did not see Jonah in a negative light. Early Christians celebrated Jonah as a hero whom God delivered from danger in a hostile world. Could there be a heroic side to Jonah?

The Bible places Jonah during the Assyrian Empire, whose army swept through Palestine conquering Israel and destroying all of Judah except Jerusalem. Their art and literature indicate that the Assyrians cultivated a reputation for cruelty and brutality. Indeed, the name "Nineveh" became a symbol of

continues down away from the Lord!

Chapter 2 finds Jonah's descent thwarted by a "great fish," sent by God to swallow Jonah. From the midst of the fish, Jonah prays a psalm. Surprisingly the psalm is not one of repentance, which we expect, but a psalm of thanksgiving! Be that as it may, the psalm seems to reconnect Jonah with God. Familiar psalms tend to do that whether or not the words fit the situation.

Chapter 3 finds Jonah again commissioned by God to go to Nineveh. Jonah

because the script played out just as Jonah feared.

The prophet knew very well the psalm that explained this painful scenario:

*God is gracious, compassionate;
God is slow to anger;
God overflows with love;
God hates sending calamity
(my translation).*

Assyria had brutalized Israel and Judah for more than 200 years! Could a ritual of repentance, no matter how sincere, wipe out two centuries of cruel conquest and



JONAH: A CLOSER LOOK

Author: Unknown. The author tells the story of the prophet Jonah, named as the son of Amittai. The only other mention of Jonah in the Scriptures is in 2 Kings 14:25.

Date and location: During the period of the Assyrian Empire.

Structure of the book: This narrative book has just four chapters, none of them longer than 17 verses.

Famous story: Jonah being swallowed (and later spit up) by the "big fish."

Well-known verse: "He said, 'In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me; from the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry.' " (2:2).

occupation? What was Jonah, prophet of divine justice, to say to infants left to die of exposure or starvation, to mothers crying for their lost children, to girls violated by a "hungry" army, to men executed because of their ethnicity? For Jonah this psalm of comfort had become a song of injustice.

The Lord said, "Do you have reason to be angry . . . ?"

Jonah said, "Yes, angry enough to die."

The Lord said, "Should I not show compassion for Nineveh, a big city with 120,000 people who don't know their right from their left and lots of animals?" (again, my translation). Thus ends the story.

The reader is left to answer God's question. There is no easy answer. Our immediate response is to embrace divine compassion, unless and until we

hear the cry of the victims and see the blood-stained soil. Then one is reminded not of God's compassion, but the poetry of Zephaniah (2:13): "[God] will stretch out his hand against the north, destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh deserted, as arid as the desert."

Pondering, as we all must, Jonah's yearning for justice and God's "should I not show compassion?," Rabbi Abraham Heschel offers a statement that rings of the Gospel: Beyond justice lies the mystery of divine compassion. And a mystery it remains. ❧

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

MESSINGER'S "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in October: Micah, by Robert Neff.

General Board gives 'first read' to BSC report, sets budget for 2008

Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, prior to Annual Conference, the General Board set a budget parameter for 2008, gave a first reading to a report on ministry options at the Brethren Service Center, acted on a resolution against depleted uranium weapons, and acted on mission funding in Haiti, among other business.

The 2008 budget parameter for Core Ministries (not including self-funding programs) was set at \$5,803,000 expense, and \$5,892,000 income. In funding and finance reports, the board heard that although the agency experienced a good year financially in 2006, this year's giving to date has fallen about 9.2 percent.

The board gave a first read to a report from the Brethren Service Center Ministry Options Exploration Committee. A final report will come to the board for action in October. Among

other recommendations, the report makes a foundational recommendation: "That the Brethren Service Center (in New Windsor, Md.) continue in its present location and that its ministries be strengthened and undergirded with new vision."

A resolution against the use of depleted uranium weapons was adopted. It was presented by Brethren Witness/Washington Office director Phil Jones, who introduced it as a partnership with Christian Peacemaker Teams and the World Council of Churches, which both have worked against such weapons. The paper states that "the primary danger of using depleted uranium in weapons comes from breathing in the DU dust created by burning or exploded weaponry, or from ingesting DU dust that has contaminated the food or water supply. A growing body of evidence suggests such exposure may increase a person's cancer risk and cause birth defects." The resolution declares the use of such weapons "a specific and compelling example of the sinfulness of war," appeals for a halt to their manufacture, lifts up the work of CPT and the WCC, and directs the Brethren Witness/Washington Office to advocate for elimination of the weapons, among other actions.

A decision with regard to funding of the Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti was made, affirming a move by staff to add the Haiti mission to projects supported by the Emerging Global Mission Fund.

In a report on a mission initiative in Sudan, director Bradley Bohrer announced the names of the lead team of mission workers: Jim and Pam Hardenbrook and Matt and Kristy Messick (see personnel announcement). An assessment team of Phil and Louise Rieman and Enten Eller also traveled to Sudan from July 8-Aug. 6.

During a reorganization meeting, a new executive committee was named: Tim Harvey, chair; Dale Minnich, vice chair; Michael Benner; Vickie Samland; Kate Spire; and Ken Wenger.



New mission workers for Sudan are consecrated at the 2007 Annual Conference, along with family members: (from left) Pam and Jim Hardenbrook, standing with grandchildren, and Matt and Kristy Messick with their children Jonah and Micah.

Personnel moves

• **Genelle Wine** has resigned as coordinator of orientation for Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) as of Oct. 19. She announced her resignation after almost five years of General Board service, beginning in 2002 as assistant to the director of BVS while serving as a volunteer. During her service as a volunteer with BVS she also was a houseparent at Casa de Esperanza de los Niños in Houston. She returned to employment with BVS as coordinator of orientation in August 2004. While serving in the position, she has worked with 13 orientation units and more than 200 volunteers, and helped start the Church of the Brethren's Service Sunday. Wine is originally from Imperial, Neb., and

is a graduate of McPherson (Kan.) College.

• A lead team of mission workers has been named for the Sudan mission: **Jim and Pam Hardenbrook** of Caldwell, Idaho, and **Matt and Kristy Messick** of Salida, Colo. The two couples are in the process of securing funding, transitioning from their current employment, and being oriented for two-year placements in Sudan scheduled to begin in January 2008. Jim Hardenbrook has pastored Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren for 15 years, served as moderator of Annual Conference in 2005, and as interim director of the Sudan Initiative in 2006. Pam Hardenbrook has been senior content developer for Axiom Inc., a technical writing company. The Hardenbrooks both hold bachelor's degrees in Bible studies from Puget Sound Christian College in Everett, Wash., and

Jim Hardenbrook received a master of ministry degree from Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa. The Messicks served together as teachers at the Comprehensive Secondary School in Nigeria, related to Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), and have been mission volunteers in Nicaragua and Burkina Faso. Kristy Messick holds a bachelor's degree in international development from the University of Guelph, Ontario, and a nursing degree from the University of Calgary, Alberta. Matt Messick has worked as lead field engineer for Haseldon Construction Co., with a bachelor's degree in construction engineering technology from Pennsylvania State University. They are parents of Jonah, age 2 1/2, and Micah, age 1.

Membership decline continues, decreases 1.4 percent in 2006

Membership in the Church of the Brethren declined by 1,814 in 2006, according to reports received by the denomination. That represents a decrease of 1.4 percent from the previous year, about the same as the decline in 2005.

Total reported membership in the US and Puerto Rico stands at 127,526. The number of full congregations fell by five, to 1,010, and the number of fellowships dropped from 42 to 39. Church planting, however, resulted in a net increase of five new projects, for a total of 15. Total reported average weekly worship attendance dropped by 1,572 from the year before, to 63,571. The number of baptisms was at its lowest level in decades, with just 1,657 reported.

Denominational membership has been on a steady decline since the early 1960s, as it has for most mainline denominations in the US. Statistics are collected annually by the Church of the Brethren *Yearbook* published by Brethren Press. The figure does not include Church of the Brethren membership in other countries including Nigeria, Brazil, India, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

Sixteen of the 23 US districts reported net membership declines last year, while seven reported increases. Some trends reversed from the previous year: Pacific Southwest District, which had the largest decrease in 2005, had the largest percentage increase in 2006, up 84 members or nearly 3.5 percent. In fact, much of the growth was west of the



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Mississippi, with the districts of Idaho, Southern Plains, and Western Plains also reporting net membership increases. Illinois and Wisconsin, Shenandoah, and Southeastern were the other districts reporting gains. Shenandoah District had the largest numerical increase, up 89 members.

Meanwhile, Atlantic Southeast District—which had the largest percentage increase in 2005—reported the largest percentage loss in 2006, down 8.9 percent (a decrease of 178 members). Five districts had declines of at least three percent. Southern Ohio District reported the greatest numerical decline, with a net loss of 371 members.

Atlantic Northeast remains the largest district, with 14,860 members at the end of 2006, followed by Shenandoah and Virginia. Missouri/Arkansas District is the denomination's smallest, with 549 total members.

Updated *Yearbook* figures are based on data provided by congregations that turn in statistical reports. In 2005, 68.7 percent of the congregations reported, a fairly consistent response to previous years; 69 percent reported in 2004. The 2007 edition of the *Yearbook* is available from Brethren Press; to order call 800-441-3712.

The church's membership decline was the topic of much discussion at the 2007 Annual Conference. Here Standing Committee members representing the church's 23 districts discuss a related query that came to the Conference. The committee responded with a call for action by congregations, districts, and the denominational agencies.

Seven students graduate from ministry training

At the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, five Training in Ministry (TRIM) and two Education for Shared Ministry (EFSM) students were recognized for completing their programs. "We ask God's blessing on these servant leaders as they minister to others in the name of Jesus," said an announcement from the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a ministry training partnership of the Church of the Brethren General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary.

TRIM graduates are Ruth Aukerman of Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren; Ronald Bashore of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren in Lebanon, Pa.; Carol Mason, staff of the General Board's Congregational Life Teams; Martha Shaak of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; and Richard Troyer of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren.

EFSM graduates are Philip Adams of Independence (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, and Jeremy Dykes of Jackson Park Church of the Brethren, Jonesborough, Tenn.

Brethren Benefit Trust screens top 25 defense contractors

As part of its socially responsible investment policy, Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) each year requests Boston Common Asset Management, one of its investment managers, to compile a list of the US military's top 25 defense contractors. The list is based on the size of contracts awarded by the Department of Defense. As directed by BBT's investment guidelines, the firms on this list are then automatically screened from BBT's investment portfolios by the investment managers.

Since some of the firms on the list are privately owned and not within BBT's potential investment universe, BBT's Board of Directors voted in April to not invest in the top 25 defense contractors that are publicly traded companies. Tightening this social screen has meant that five privately held companies were dropped from BBT's list and five new names were added.

Many of the names on the list are readily identifiable, such as

General Dynamics, but some of the names are not immediately associated with the military, most notably FedEx. FedEx primarily contracts with the Department of Defense to provide airlift cargo services. The US military contracts heavily with commercial carriers—in the first Gulf War, according to Boston Common, 27 percent of all cargo was shipped by commercial carriers. FedEx also provides the military with "White Glove Services" to transport sensitive materials that need to be carefully guarded and tracked throughout the shipping process.

The top 25 publicly owned defense contractors are: 1. Lockheed Martin; 2. Boeing Company; 3. Northrop Grumman; 4. General Dynamics; 5. Raytheon; 6. Halliburton; 7. L-3 Communications Holding; 8. BAE Systems PLC; 9. United Technologies; 10. Computer Sciences; 11. Humana; 12. ITT Industries; 13. General Electric Company; 14. Health Net; 15. Electronic Data Systems; 16. Public Warehousing; 17. Honeywell International; 18. Textron; 19. Armor Holdings; 20. URS; 21. Amerisource Bergen; 22. Harris; 23. FedEx; 24. British Petroleum PLC; 25. Exxon Mobil.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 6-8 Caring Ministries Assembly (Association of Brethren Caregivers), Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Sept. 15-16 Church of the Brethren 300th anniversary opening event, Germantown Church of the Brethren, Philadelphia

Sept. 21 International Day of Prayer for Peace

Sept. 21-23 Association of Brethren Caregivers board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Sept. 23-Oct. 12 Brethren Volunteer Service orientation, Peace Valley, Mo.

Oct. 11-13 300th anniversary academic conference, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

Oct. 19-21 Interfaith National Observance of Children's Sabbath

Oct. 20-22 General Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Oct. 26-28 Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees meeting, Richmond, Ind.

Nov. 4 National Junior High Sunday

Nov. 11 National Donor Sabbath

Nov. 16-17 Brethren Benefit Trust board meeting

Ruthann Knechel Johansen called as president of Bethany Seminary

The Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees called Ruthann Knechel Johansen of Granger, Ind., as president beginning July 1. Bethany, located in Richmond, Ind., is the graduate school and academy for theological education for the Church of the Brethren.

Johansen, who has served as adjunct faculty at Bethany and has been a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School (1992-1993) and Princeton Theological Seminary (1983-1984), said in accepting the appointment: "The Church of the Brethren, our society, and the world need the faith and Christ-centered vision Bethany Theological Seminary and our church have offered since their foundations. . . . Bethany Seminary is not simply an institution charged with educating professional clergy; it is also an inspirational resource for study and empowerment for all believers within and beyond the denomination who seek to embody the love, justice, mercy, and peace of Jesus Christ in an often fearful and violent world."

She most recently was a professor in the Program of Liberal Studies and a faculty fellow of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for

International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. For 13 years she administered and taught in the College of Arts and Letters interdisciplinary seminar "Ideas, Values, Images" at Notre Dame. She holds a Ph.D. in English with emphasis on religious, psychological, and philosophical thought in literature from Drew University, an M.A. in English from Columbia University Teachers College, and a B.S. in English and music from Manchester College.

Johansen is a member of Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind., and is moderator-elect of Northern Indiana District. She has served on denominational study committees and was a member of the Bethany board of trustees from 1985 to 1995.

"The board of trustees of Bethany Seminary is very pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Ruthann Knechel Johansen as the next president of Bethany Theological Seminary," said chair Anne M. Reid. "She brings a deep love of the gospel and the Kingdom and a great appreciation for the denomination to the office. Her skills in listening and in reconciliation will be invaluable in helping the seminary relate to the larger church."

Ruthann Knechel Johansen addresses the delegate body of Annual Conference in July, after her introduction to the church as the new president of Bethany Theological Seminary.



Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$45,000 for the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, for long-term relief work by Church World Service (CWS)
- \$29,000 to a CWS appeal for the North Sumatra province of Indonesia, following flooding
- \$25,000 for the Brethren Disaster Ministries Hurricane Katrina rebuilding "Site 1" in Lucedale, Miss., and \$25,000 for "Site 2" in Pearl River, La.

- \$25,000 to CWS in the wake of flooding in Somalia and Kenya
- \$24,000 to CWS to provide aid to Indonesia following flooding
- \$20,000 for a Children's Disaster Services project at FEMA's Welcome Home Center in New Orleans
- \$9,000 to CWS for aid to Uganda after years of conflict, worsened by recent floods and drought
- \$12,000 for an emergency relief operation by CWS for internally displaced people in

- Chad, a "spill-over" of the conflict in Darfur
- \$10,000 to the St. Joseph Rebuild Center in New Orleans, La.
- \$10,000 to a CWS appeal for the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been affected by decades of violence and the displacement of millions
- \$7,500 for CWS work following flooding in Manggarai District of Indonesia
- \$7,500 for work by CWS following an earthquake in China's Yunan province

INTERNATIONALS PULL TOGETHER PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rican Brethren hold 20th island assembly

Church of the Brethren congregations in Puerto Rico held their 20th Island Assembly in early June and celebrated the graduation of the third class of students from the Puerto Rico Theological Institute.

On June 1, the Instituto Teológico de Puerto Rico awarded nine students certificates for completing the necessary requirements to graduate from the Church of the Brethren ministry training program in Puerto Rico. This is the third graduating class.

Lorens Crespo Reyes, graduating student and pastor of La Casa del Amigo in Arecibo, gave an inspirational message based on 1 Corinthians 4:20: "For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power." José Calleja Otero, graduating student who began a radio evangelism ministry in December, was the keynote preacher for the opening worship of the Island Assembly that evening.

Another graduating student, Rio Prieto pastor Miguel Alicea Torres, brought an item of new business to the assembly the next after-

noon. He has begun a church project in San Sebastian as an outgrowth of his radio ministry, and requested recognition from the assembly delegates.

The quorum for the assembly was met with 22 delegates in attendance, plus 24 other registered guests. Carol Yeazell, interim director of the General Board's Congregational Life Teams, brought greetings from general secretary Stan Noffsinger, and from Atlantic Southeast District executive minister Martha Beach.

In other business, reports were received, budget deliberations discussed, and nominations held. The moderator of the assembly was Jose Medina, a former graduate of the theological institute and a licensed minister from the Manati church.



Moderator-elect is Severo Romero, with Ana D. Ostolaza and Nelson Sanchez receiving confirmation as secretary and board chair, respectively.

Next year's assembly will be held June 6-7, 2008, at Castañer Church of the Brethren, which has experienced a 30-percent growth increase this past year and is discussing the need to expand worship facilities.



On June 1, the Instituto Teológico de Puerto Rico awarded nine students certificates for completing the necessary requirements to graduate from the Church of the Brethren ministry training program. This third graduating class included (from left) Aristides Guíérrez, Lorens Crespo Reyes, Madelina Cruz Rodríguez, Mildred Acevado, Miguel Alicea Torres, José Calleja Otero, and Jorge Rivera who is the executive director of the Puerto Rico Sub-District.

- \$5,000 to the Brethren Disaster Ministries program of the General Board for early assessments of possible disaster projects
- \$5,000 to CWS following severe storms and tornados in Alabama, Georgia, Missouri, and Arkansas
- \$5,000 to CWS following flooding and tornados on the East Coast and northeast United States
- \$5,000 to support the work of Eden Valley Church of the Brethren to help tornado sur-

- vivors in the area around Greensburg, Kan.
- \$5,000 to a CWS appeal following flooding in southern India
- \$4,000 to the United Farm Worker Foundation following a freeze that destroyed citrus crops and affected some 28,000 farm workers
- \$4,000 responding to tornados in Florida, supporting CWS Disaster Response and Recovery Liaisons, local recovery groups, and shipping of material resources

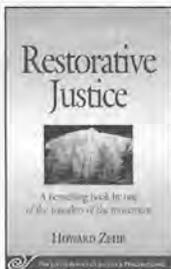
- \$2,500 to CWS to support thousands who have been displaced by fighting in southern Colombia
- \$2,500 for a CWS campaign for families of children affected by a munitions explosion in Mozambique

Recent grants from the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund

- \$50,000 for the Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Program in North Korea

- \$40,000 to the Africa Initiative of Church World Service
- \$10,000 for operational support to the Foods Resource Bank
- \$10,000 for CWS water projects in the Aceh province of Indonesia
- \$6,000 to provide clean water and sanitation for Quan Chu Commune Junior Secondary School in Vietnam
- \$5,000 to CWS and Church Aid, Inc., to help rebuild Liberia's food capacity

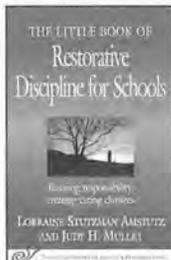
Cutting Edge. Written by the Experts. Only \$4.95!



The Little Book of Restorative Justice, by Howard Zehr

A very engaging presentation by one of the foremost experts. After a crime occurs, how do we involve all who have a stake in the remedies? What does justice require, if we include the victim as well as the offender? A bestseller in the field.

76 pages, \$4.95, paperback



The Little Book of Conflict Transformation, by John Paul Lederach

Internationally-known expert presents the core principles of his break-through thinking in a readable, understandable way. Appeals to both the novice and the expert at the same time.

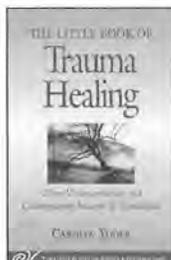
64 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools

by Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz and Judy H. Mullet

Timely, well-written book by two experts. How to apply the principles of restorative justice to our schools. Examines problems and solutions. Getting great response!

88 pages, \$4.95, paperback



The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics

by Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright

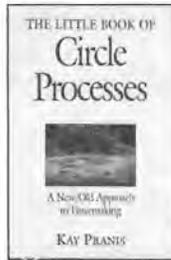
Some subjects seem too hot for a group to discuss sanely. Not necessarily. *Cool Tools* is rich in anecdotes and practical how-to for any group faced with tension-filled decision-making.

74 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Trauma Healing, by Carolyn Yoder

A leading expert looks at situations where violence strikes and community security is threatened. Strategies for trauma awareness and resilience are proposed. Very timely.

90 pages, \$4.95, paperback



The Little Book of Strategic Negotiation, by Jayne Seminore Docherty

A fresh look at negotiations in tough, difficult situations: which parent gets custody; bargaining between workers and management; establishing a new government after a civil war. Excellent.

90 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Circle Processes, by Kay Pranis

A new, revitalized look at the old practice of gathering in circles to solve problems.

80 pages, \$4.95, paperback



The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding, by Lisa Schirch

Clear, incisive strategies for using strategic planning at all levels of society to build the architecture for peaceful and just communities and societies.

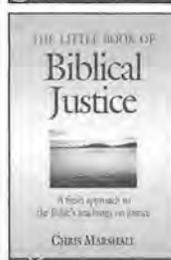
89 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Family Group Conferences

by Allan MacRae and Howard Zehr

A hopeful approach when youth cause harm. Excellent resource by two leading experts.

76 pages, \$4.95, paperback



The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison, by Barb Toews

Restorative justice, with its emphasis on identifying the justice needs of everyone involved in a crime, is helping restore prisoners' sense of humanity while holding them accountable for their actions.

80 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Biblical Justice, by Chris Marshall

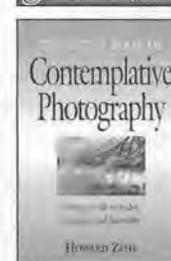
Much of our society's understanding of justice rests on the Judeo/Christian tradition. But what does the Bible really say about justice? A leading theologian makes an engaging, readable presentation.

74 pages, \$4.95, paperback

The Little Book of Contemplative Photography, by Howard Zehr

Restorative justice pioneer Zehr is also an accomplished photographer. No photography expertise needed. For anyone who would like to couple photography with seeing and thinking more deeply.

80 pages, \$4.95, paperback



At local bookstores. Or directly from the publisher.
P.O. Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534.
Mastercard, Visa, Discover, and AmEx accepted.
Shipping/Handling, add 10% (\$3.00 minimum).

For discounts on
group quantities,
call 800/762-7171,
ext. 221

Good Books
800/762-7171
www.GoodBooks.com

ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Graduating senior Anne Gordon Powell received the Melissa D. Jett Community Service Award May 1 at the annual Awards Convocation. Megan E. Hiatt received the Esther Mae Wilson Petcher Memorial Scholarship for 2007-2008. It is given each year to a rising senior who must be in good academic standing and demonstrate leadership in campus activities with emphasis on religious life.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

The school recently elected six new members to its board of trustees: Nevin Cooley of Manheim; Warren Eshbach of Dover; Janice Longenecker Holsinger of Palmyra; Robert O. Kerr of Austin, Texas; Wallace Landes Jr. of Palmyra; and Michael Mason of Hagerstown, Md. Eshbach, Holsinger, and Landes are all members of the Church of the Brethren.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata presented five alumni-related awards June 9 during Alumni Weekend. Henry Gibbel of Lititz, Pa., was awarded the Alumni Achievement Award; William Alexander of Huntingdon, Pa., received the Harold B. Brumbaugh Alumni Service Award; Christopher Bush of Kingston, R.I., received the Young Alumni Achievement Award; Mark Sloan, an executive with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, received the William E. Swigart Jr. Alumni Humanitarian Award; and Steven McElroy of Nashville, Tenn., received the Health Professions Alumni Achievement Award.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

Andrew Ankeny, previously of East Texas Baptist University, has been named just the fourth head football coach at La Verne since 1948. He succeeds Don Morel, who stepped down after 12 seasons. . . . La Verne has joined with partner institution Citrus College to launch a newly created Title V Grant Partnership website for teaching careers and resources, at <http://academic.ulv.edu/~ear/t5/>.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Athletics director and head wrestling coach Tom Jarman retired Aug. 1 after 18 years with the school. As head wrestling coach, Jarman has produced 22 All-Americans, 26 Academic All-Americans, a national champion, and three Top 10 national team finishes. Jarman entered the National Wrestling Coaches Association NCAA Division III Hall of Fame in 2003.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

A recently released report by the Women's Sports Foundation titled "Who's Playing College Sports? Trends in Participation" (June 5, 2007) listed McPherson and Kansas State University as the only two higher education institutions in Kansas to earn an "A" rating in a study of women's and men's participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Mechanicsburg youth help out with 30-hour fast

Five youth and two advisors at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren raised \$300 for the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund in May.

The "Regnuh" (turning hunger around) lock-in was structured similarly to the well-known World Vision 30-Hour Famine events, which Mechanicsburg had done in the past. Youth advisor Barbara Cisney said "the energy was different this year" due to helping "a Brethren cause."

The participants ate their last meal at lunch on Friday, then met at the church that evening for games and conversation. After a good night's sleep, the group headed to a variety of work projects in nearby York, Pa., the next day. Tasks included sweeping, weeding, planting, and painting. Some rest and prayer followed before breaking the fast with some soup at 6 p.m. Saturday.

"Since I gave my life to the Lord I have started caring more and more about other people, and especially since NYC (National Youth Conference) where I learned what other people have to go through on a daily basis just to get by," youth group member Aleshia Hock said. "So this year the Regnuh famine meant a lot more to me. I felt like I was actually doing some good for other people."

A total of \$300 was raised through the effort. The gift was celebrated during worship on June 24, when youth shared some reflections and pastor Del Keeney centered his sermon around hunger and spoke about the Global Food Crisis Fund.



Walt Wiltschek

Virginia Meadows of Petersburg, Pa., gets the Young Adult Conference coffeehouse rolling with an upbeat song.

Grout calls young adults to 'enter in' to kingdom

This year's Church of the Brethren Young Adult Conference, held at Camp Harmony near Hooversville, Pa., brought together about 85 people Memorial Day weekend.

Paul Grout of the A Place Apart community in Putney, Vt., provided keynote leadership through the weekend, speaking on the theme "But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers" from James 1.

"You can sit through hundreds of sermons, and at the end of your life not understand the kingdom of God," Grout told the group. "You have to enter into it." Grout discussed elements needed to be "fully alive" and find wholeness, moving into a "new paradigm" of faith in which seeking is key.

Several young adults planned worship for the weekend, with Grout and Meryl Reist preaching in two of the services and a group doing a drama in a third. Brethren folksinger Joseph Helfrich led music. The conference schedule also included a campfire, games, recreation, workshops, and singing.

Next year's National Young Adult Conference will be a larger event, scheduled for Aug. 11-15, 2008, in Estes Park, Colo.



'My Name Is Earl'

Trailer park theology

Warning: Do not watch the NBC comedy *My Name Is Earl* if you are easily offended by rough language, adult situations, interracial marriage, clever writing, sharp humor, Hispanics, trailer trash, good intentions, great acting, fantastic writing, poor people, casual criminality, and, especially, by the people that churches have done their best to successfully keep out of church at all costs.

That includes *our* churches. Invisible people walk in plain sight in our communities and—mostly because of the pious gatekeepers who protect and defend mainline congregations—don't have a clue that Jesus loves them.



FRANK RAMIREZ

It's not that they're ignorant of Jesus. But no one has told them the gospel. During the first season of *My Name Is Earl*, one character is relieved to discover the reason that the Jesus in the *Last Supper* wall hanging seemed to lean towards him was because it was covering up a hole in the wall and the blowing wind ruffled it. He had thought Jesus was mad at him for putting a Darwin fish on the back of his car.

The irony is, of course, that Jesus came specifically with Good News for the poor, the outcasts, the marginalized, the downtrodden: the Earls, Randys, Joys, and so-ons of this world, the sort of people who would ruin the middle-class country club that most churches have become.

I'd gone a whole month without time off earlier this year, so I took an unscheduled day off and watched the entire first season of *My Name Is Earl* on DVD. I'd seen an occasional

There is growth and transformation for all the characters as they become involved—sometimes against their will—in this quest to right Earl's wrongs. We all could do worse.

episode, but there's something about immersing yourself in a whole season of 20-minute programs to make you realize, "Oh my goodness, this isn't just great—this is real life." The show has heart, depth, and humanity; and if the theology is totally out of whack don't blame title character Earl Hickey.

The series, developed by executive producer Greg Garcia and director Marc Buckland, is told from the point of view of Earl (played by Jason Lee), a petty thief who, though not exactly evil, has treated people poorly all his life.

Immediately upon scratching off a \$100,000 winner on a lottery ticket he is hit by a car, loses the ticket, and ends up in the hospital, where his wife (Jamie Pressley) divorces him and he's thrown out of his trailer. As he lies in bed recovering, he watches a celebrity explain the concept of *karma*. He concludes the reason bad things have been happening to him is that he's been bad, so he makes a list of every bad thing he's ever done and pledges to make up for

every one of them. As if to confirm his new theology the winning ticket magically floats back into his life to fund his quest.

He's aided by his younger brother Randy (Ethan Suplee), who is a little slow but earnest; his ex-wife's husband, Darnell (Eddie Steeples), an African-American in the witness protection program who works in the Crab Shack and is easily the most intelligent member of the gang; Catalina (Nadine Velazquez), an illegal alien who is the maid at the rundown motel where Earl and Randy take up residence; as well as a rag-tag group of cronies who were former partners in crime.

Of course, it's not always easy to undo a wrong. Actions have far-reaching consequences. Earl apologizes to a friend who spent two years in prison for a crime Earl committed. The friend, who converted to Christianity in prison, accepts the apology, but the ex-con's mother is furious because she lost two years with her son that can't be replaced. Earl gives the mother two extra years with her son by kidnapping her and forcing her—and himself as well—to quit smoking.

In another episode Earl returns the gasoline he stole from a resident of his old trailer park, only to discover that each time he stole the gas he prevented that person from committing suicide by asphyxiation: The car kept running out of gas whenever the victim would try to kill himself. The real problem was that this man had no friends, no self-esteem, and was unlovable. At the end of the episode he is still unlovable, but that doesn't prevent Earl and Randy from accepting an invitation to watch television with him.

There is growth and transformation for all the characters as they become involved—sometimes against their will—in this quest to right Earl's wrongs. We all could do worse.

Of course, the idea that both good and bad get what they deserve (see Psalm 1) is directly contradicted by the attitude of many other Psalms, the book of Job, and other scriptures. The real point of the book of Revelation, for instance, is that

justice is not generally experienced in this world but the next.

But no one has told Earl and his buddies this Good News, and they're not likely to, because mainline churches haven't found a way to reach out to them. So in the meantime they have to remain content with half a theology—while those of us lucky enough to have discovered this show remain content with a well written (I said that, didn't I?), insightful comedy about human nature.

Watch. Enjoy. Learn. But remember: I warned you about the language and the situations. Maybe you had just better skip the whole thing, unless you've got a sense of humor. **WU**

(P.S. The second season ended with a cliffhanger in which it has become apparent to Earl that there's a flaw in his theory of *karma*—sometimes when you do the right thing the world doesn't reward you.)

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

ABOUT THE SHOW

My Name Is Earl airs at 8 p.m. Eastern on Thursday evenings on NBC. More details are at www.nbc.com/My_Name_Is_Earl/.

Why aren't Christians and others marching in the streets demanding that our government stop this stupid war in Iraq? Some are, of course, but not nearly enough.

Looking out for ministers' health

It was good to be at Annual Conference in Cleveland. It was a great experience to see that the Church of the Brethren is undertaking the vision of Revelation 7:9. I can see that undertaking this vision can work to reverse membership decline.

But I will always think of my fellow ministers and church servants (male or female) with a heavy heart and will ask myself: "Do they have medical insurance? Do they and their families have medical needs not covered?" As a young minister for the American Baptists (no USA then) in 1963 my wife and family (three small children at that time) had a car roll over, and my wife and I were hospitalized for two weeks.

Our small church in Philadelphia could not afford medical insurance. Our uncovered hospitalization was covered by the American Baptist Ministers and Missionary fund. I think we have a

similar fund in the Church of the Brethren, but the gravity of the difficulty our church servants face may require us to consider a special fund with denomination-wide special offerings yearly. We have several special offerings a year. We may need this one. It could be the "3M Fund," something that would help

Ministers, Missionaries, and other church servants' Medical needs.

My prayer is that the servants of the Lord be well. My prayer is that all receive the wonderful, extraordinary living love the Lord can give. To me, this spells WELL.

Don Flint
Flint, Mich.

WE'RE EXPANDING!

**Choose a spacious new cottage at
Bridgewater Retirement Community,
and receive our friendly,
small-town spirit for free!**




*Call today for
a personal tour!*



Simple pleasures. Abundant life.

302 North Second Street
Bridgewater, VA 22812
www.bridgewaterretirement.org

IN THE HEART OF
THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Discover Crist Farm Crossing, Bridgewater's planned expansion. Savor the fellowship and convenience of campus living, along with the privacy of a spacious new maintenance-free cottage—up to 1,700 square feet. Enjoy inviting campus amenities, including a restaurant-style dining room, modern wellness center and spa. Secure your future with priority access to healthcare by staff who care for you and about you.

**To learn more,
call 540-828-2550 or
toll-free 1-800-419-9129**

MM 9/07

**Great Harvest
Church Planting**

District of Illinois/Wisconsin
Church of the Brethren



Great Harvest Church Planting is looking for individuals to start new, multiplying congregations of believers in the IL/WI District.

We offer training, coaching, and grant funds to get you started.

**We Can Help You
Explore The Call To
Plant A Church**

If you are not satisfied with ministry that is "status quo", if you have a heart for lost people and God has given you a desire to live and do ministry in our region contact Lynda DeVore.

**Email: Lynda@ncdb.org
Phone: 630-675-9740.**

Pontius' Puddle



Walter McSherry
Spartanburg, S.C.

Health plan is misguided

The May 2007 issue of MESSENGER reported on a Church of the Brethren seminar held in New York City and Washington, focusing on advocating a "single-payer" national health insurance scheme similar to British and Canadian socialized medicine, and lobbying for a specific proposal before Congress, a United States National Health Insurance Act.

It is difficult to see why our church believes a government takeover of our medical system is necessary. Our church should realize that hospitals in this country already give emergency care to any-

one in need of it, regardless of whether they do or do not have Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance. In nearby Anderson, S.C., the AmMed Hospital System wrote off \$98 million in 2006 alone for treatment of those who were unable or unwilling to pay for their medical care. Hospitals recover much of their losses through charges to patients who have the financial means for payment. No one is denied medical care.

I further fear for what may happen to Christian-based hospitals when the federal government becomes their single payer and possesses the power to dictate to them.

Perhaps the Church of the Brethren can use its resources for better purposes than lobbying the government and promoting federal legislation for socialized medicine, "global warming" restrictions, homosexual rights, and other favorite causes of the political left.

How do we 'grow' leaders?

The July/August issue of MESSENGER is certainly a contender for the "best ever." The essay on Nehemiah is a winner. Every congregation ought to read and study that seriously as they consider the work of lay people everywhere. But the secret was: They had a leader.

A future issue must consider how we "grow" leaders. My present fear is that homes are so busy and distracted (yes, sometimes even with church work) that they have no time to "bring up" the children, either as leaders or followers. God grant us wisdom for the living of these days.

Marianne Michael
Hills, Iowa



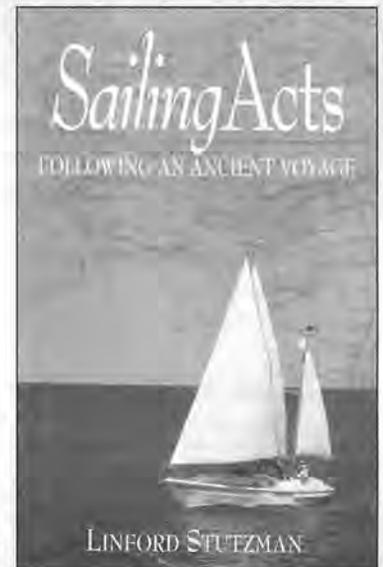
SailingActs: Following St. Paul's Voyages

Seafaring isn't for the faint of heart. It wasn't for the Apostle Paul in the first century A.D.—shipwrecked, imprisoned, and often a stranger in foreign lands.

And it turned out to be a heart-stopping task some two thousand years later, when a professor and his wife undertook a 14-month journey by sailboat! They stopped in eight countries, visiting every site where Paul stopped on his tumultuous missionary journeys.

It's a great adventure story. But the author also will increase your understanding and appreciation for St. Paul.

To engage the author for a presentation to your group about the "Sailing Acts" adventure, contact ChurchRelations@emu.edu, or call 800/368-3383 and ask about the "Sailing Acts" presentation.



5½ x 8½ • 330 pages
\$14.95, paperback
dozens of color photos



At local bookstores or directly from the publisher.
800/762-7171 • P.O. Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534 • www.GoodBooks.com
All major credit cards accepted. Add 10% (\$3.00 minimum) for S&H.

Where are all the Christians?

Why aren't Christians and others marching in the streets demanding that our government stop this stupid war in Iraq? Some are, of course, but not nearly enough. If we really are followers of the Prince of Peace, we should ask our legislators to stop funding this ill-conceived and poorly managed war.

The Church of the Brethren teaches that all war is immoral, and I believe that

the war in Iraq is no exception. Jesus said, "Love your enemies." In addition to the thousands of American and Iraqi lives being destroyed, private contractors like Halliburton are stealing billions of dollars in no-bid contracts.

Robert Greenwald testified to the House Appropriations Committee about his film, *Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers*. He spent a year talking to soldiers, truck drivers, and others about the terrible

joining
Faith & Fair Trade

The Church of the Brethren Coffee Project

A partnership of Brethren Witness/Washington Office and Equal Exchange



COCLA Cooperative member sorting coffee, Quillabamba, Peru

When you purchase fairly traded coffee, tea and chocolate through the Church of the Brethren Coffee Project, you join a growing network of 40 small farmer co-operatives in 20 countries, including the United States, receiving fair prices, affordable credit and a long-term, direct trade relationship through a 100% Fair Trade, worker-owned cooperative, Equal Exchange.

Fundraising with Fair Trade

Use Equal Exchange products to raise money for youth groups or mission projects, and to educate your congregation about Fair Trade.

Contact the Interfaith Program and ask for our Church Fundraising Packet for helpful information and suggestions.



For more information on ordering for your church, fundraiser or alternative gift market:
tel 774.776.7366 www.equalexchange.coop/how-to-order

Plant a Sign.
GROW THE MOVEMENT.



SHARE YOUR WITNESS.

- 10 @ \$5.00 ea. \$50.00*
- 20 @ \$4.50 ea. \$90.00*
- 30 @ \$4.00 ea. \$120.00*
- 40 @ \$3.50 ea. \$140.00*
- 50 @ \$3.00 ea. \$150.00*

Mix & Match - Any Combination
*Plus S & H \$25.00 per order, UPS Ground

We Accept PayPal!

18" x 24", Printed on Weatherproof Coroplast™
2 Sided, Includes 1 wire stand per sign.
100% of Contributions Prints More Signs.



Manassas
Church of the Brethren
10047 Nokesville Road
Manassas, Virginia 20110

703-368-4783 www.manassasbrethren.org



Take time this holy season to ponder anew the miracle of Christmas and the manifestation of a God who chose our own flesh as a means of redeeming the world.

- Paula Bowser

\$2.25 per copy

\$1.75 for orders placed before October 1st

Order today from
Brethren Press
800-441-3712


Brethren Press
1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120-1694
www.brethrenpress.com

waste going on. One example was the large burn pits where equipment and trucks were burned: "With a cost-plus contract, these people receive a percentage of the money they spend." One company CEO was paid \$22,249,453 in 2004.

Our president keeps talking about supporting the troops. What he really means is supporting Halliburton and other private contractors. If Jesus were here today, he would be leading the march and yelling, "Where are all the Christians?"

Delbert Blickenstaff
Greenville, Ohio

CLASSIFIED ADS

We at Brethren Press would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us out at Annual Conference. To all of you who helped, from unloading the books to helping customers, to tearing it all down at the end, we are grateful for and humbled by your generosity. Thanks to each and every one of the Brethren Press bookstore volunteers.

Need Property Insurance? Mutual Aid Association (MAA) has been providing reasonable-cost coverage for homes, farms, renter's contents, collectible items, business and rental properties for over 120 years. Join other sisters and brothers who are part of this all-Brethren business group! Our friendly staff is ready to assist you in any way we can. 1-800-255-1243; maa@maabrethren.com; Fax 1-800-238-7535; 3094 Jeep Rd, Abilene, KS 67410.

Be a co-participant in the worship service and the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Church of the Brethren in Schwarzenau on August 3, 2008. Plan now to participate in a Brethren Heritage Tour of Brethren historical sites in Europe, plus some "tourist" highlights from Holland to the Swiss Alps. July 29-August 10, 2008. For information please write to J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, or e-mail kreiderk@etown.edu.

300th Anniversary Celebration in Schwarzenau. Persons contemplating attending the 300th Anniversary Celebration / 2008 Brethren World Assembly in Schwarzenau, Germany, on August 2-3, 2008, are asked to contact Dale Ulrich at 26 College Woods Drive, Bridgewater, VA 22812, by phoning 540-828-6548, or via e-mail: daulrich@comcast.net. This celebration is being planned and coordinated by the Board of Directors of Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., representing all of the Brethren bodies. Ulrich is serving as the Brethren Encyclopedia coordinator for the event.

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

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.

TRAVEL WITH TOURMAGINATION TO EXPLORE THE WORLD

2007 TOURS

LANDS of the BIBLE (September 26 - October 8)
SCENIC RHINE RIVER CRUISE (October 13-21)
BEHIND THE VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT
(November 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)
SPRINGTIME CRUISE from AMSTERDAM to PARIS
(March 22 - April 2)
EXPERIENCE SOUTH AMERICA (March 28 - April 11)
VISIT "TRANSYLVANIA EMERGING" - ROMANIA
and HUNGARY (April 21 - May 2 - with MEDA)
MOSCOW and SIBERIA (May 24 - June 4)

ISRAEL/PALESTINE with AMBS (May 25 - June 4)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 4-16)
ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and WALES
(June 25 - July 7)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 7-20)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE
(October 8-21)

2009 & 2010 TOURS

CHECK OUR WEB SITE



"Building bridges among Mennonites and other Christians around the world through custom-designed travel."

CALL 1-800-565-0451

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR TOUR

E-MAIL: office@tourmagination.com WEB: www.tourmagination.com

9 Willow Street, Waterloo, ON N2J 1V6 Canada

Reg. #50014322

1011 Cathill Road, Sellersville, PA 18960-1315 USA

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-325-8059 ext. 206; jcllements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Ambler, Pa.: Doug Graham, Edgar Gabriel, Ward Hickman, Ellen Rowen
Annaville, Pa.: Edward D. Hackleman, Katherine E. Hackleman, John L. Hummer, Virginia Ann Hummer, Ralph Burchett, Deborah Burchett, Susan Hertzog
Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Barry Belknap, Donna Belknap
Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio: Karen Garrett, Kelly Gillum
Burnettsville, Ind.: Kyle Bixler, Mason DeWitt, Mati DeWitt, Barry Hickman, Donna Hickman, Brock Maddock, Levi Pritts, Melissa Ruff, Andy Wright, Sarah Wright
Camp Creek, Etna Green, Ind.: Sarah Stichter, Gil Stutzman, Wes Williamson
Circle of Peace, Peoria, Ariz.: Elena Toner, Jen Toner, Jeff Toner
Dayton, Va.: Jim Swope, Julie Swope
Fellowship, Martinsburg, W.Va.: LeRoy Biller, Marilyn Saunders, Harry Saunders
Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Kristalie Patches, Joseph Martin, Gabriel Martin
Henry Fork, Rocky Mount, Va.: Chris Barnwell, CJ Scalf, Kala Beth Scalf, Phyliss Reyes, David Holcomb, III, Junior Hodges, Nick Shockley
Jacksonville, Fla.: Susan Boxx, Debi Carnes, Tommy Carnes
Lansing, Mich.: Micki Horst, Lori Waas, Beth DuBois
Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.: Karen Myers, Judy Laubenstein, Christopher Lynn Brubaker, Jenna Marie Gagliano, Ian Joel Hetrick, Jeffrey Adam Miller, Joseph Dale Brubaker
Living Peace, Columbus, Ohio: Sarah Garrett, Dena Lee, Janice Shull
Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md.: Ben Henniges, Robin Henniges, Bailey Henniges, Brian Ferris, Danielle Ferris, Diane Lowe, Jean Diller, Betty Reese Eyler, Zion Metz, Jerry Campbell, Donna Campbell
Manassas, Va.: Wayne Stevens, Barbara Stevens, Steve Strawderman, Laurie Hersch, Randy Bass, Amy Bass, Briana Bass, Jan Hawkins, Jamie Baisden, Patti Baisden, Virginia Baisden
Marsh Creek, Gettysburg, Pa.: James Chrimer, Christian Conner, Rebecca Hegberg,

Timothy Hegberg, Michael Taylor, Chelsea Taylor, Jessica Taylor, Jeanie Smith, Jordan Woodward
McPherson, Kan.: Dan Lichty, Lynne Lichty
Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa.: Adam Ulm, Katie Lentz
Mechanicsburg, Pa.: John Mumma Sandy Mumma, Chris Hoover, Sarah Hoover, Levi Mumma, Sarah Ebersole Mumma, Judy Zolensky
Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Dale Stauffer, Tawnya Stauffer
Midway, Lebanon, Pa.: Kayla Krall, Denise Ashby, Becky Hershey, Dan Geib, James McKinney, Jr., Deborah McKinney, Amanda McKinney, Geraldine Waltermeyer, Nancy Dennis, Deanna Dennis, Jesse Nolen, Micki Geib, Amanda Zuck, Joshua Martin, Eric Newswanger, Melissa Newswanger
Mohican, West Salem, Ohio: Michael Bowman, Margaret Bowman, Randel Recker, Jenifer Recker, Dean Varns, Diane Varns
Monitor, McPherson, Kan.: Joshua Leck, Shana Leck, Aaron Leck, Connie R. Burkholder
Moorefield, W.Va.: Shawn Michele Cullers
Mountain View, McGeheysville, Va.: Lisa Good, Mark Litchford, Courtney Litchford, Amanda Litchford
Nokesville, Va.: Sydney Stanto Nguyen, Kathy Snyder Yohn
North Webster, Ind.: Missy Tom, Brittany Starr Bills, Tonya Croucher, Clinton Croucher
Osage, Kan.: Robert Collins, Shi Ann Crumppacker, Cheryl Ingram, David Ingram, Gerald Kirby, Janice Kirby, Paula Surridge
Palmyra, Pa.: Donald Laysar, Carol Kulp, David Kulp, Sondra Simmons, Ben Simmons, Benjamin Long, Doug Wisner, Leidra Granzow, Jennifer Jurell, Nancy Stamm, Voohris Cantrell
Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.: Gene Watkins, Elaine Watkins, Wilbur Stump
Pleasant Hill, Ohio: Derek Koon, Sarah Koon, Richard L. Noll, Sr., Norma Noll, Betty Iddings
Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va.: Tyler McGuire
Prairie View, Scott City, Kan.: Matthew Tuttle, Sean Tuttle
Purchase Line, Clymer, Pa.: Penny Mora, Tiffany Mora, Leah Walls, Jason Barkey, Susan Barkey, Todd White, Valerie White
Quakertown, Pa.: Miranda Howard, Jason Haring, Janel Zomberg, Rebecca Wadell, Brian Kelly, Karen Steich
Reading, First, Wyomissing, Pa.: Vincent Kramlich, Kelly Kramlich, Chaz Kramlich,

Kylie Kramlich
Richmond, Ind.: Anna Lisa Gross, Elizabeth Keller
Ridgely, Md.: Renee Dodd
Salamonie, Warren, Ind.: Karen McCoy, Stacy McCoy
Smith River, Woolwine, Va.: Curtis Aaron Roberson
Springfield, Coopersburg, Pa.: Rachel Payson, Dale Frederick, Kathy Frederick
Stonerstown, Saxton, Pa.: John Clark, Homer Rourke, Warren Smith, Mary Smith
Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va.: Sallie Garrison, Karin Lambert, Ashley Lohr, Pam Lohr, Shelby May, Diana Scharf, Phillip Stone, III, Adam Zirkle, Kristi Zirkle
Trotwood, Ohio: Kayla Herman, Chandra Howard, Anna Snyder, Dennis Snyder, Jared Whittaker
Warrensburg, Mo.: Betty Baile
Winter Park, Fla.: Robert Dunlap, Dawn Dunlap, Chad Dunlap, Erin Dunlap, Tammy Warren, Perry Warren, Randy Lewis, Beth Lewis, John Koepke, Sally Koepke, Delores Amos, Kimberly Wright, Shieva Reece, Kiara Reece
York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Meagan Harlow

Wedding Anniversaries

Anderson, Erv and Ann, Dayton, Ohio, 50
Aukerman, Alva D. and Pauline, Greenville, Ohio, 65
Bowman, Fred and Wanda, Bridgewater, Va., 60
Bowman, Lloyd and Shirley, McFarland, Calif., 60
Brandt, Luke and Anna, Palmyra, Pa., 60
Christ, Melvin and Alberta, Lowpoint, Ill., 65
Coffman, Paul and Marilyn, South English, Iowa, 50
Cowger, Harold and Juanita, Linticum Heights, Md., 50
Crouse, Donald and Ruth, Shippensburg, Pa., 60
Dorwart, Jack and Yolande, Harrisburg, Pa., 60
Fike, John and June, Sebring Fla., 70
Gibboney, Dale and Edna, Elgin, Ill., 60
Gillen, Duane and Maxine, Adrian, Mich., 60
Grove, Charles and June, South English, Iowa, 60
Grubb, Ray and Della Mae, New Enterprise, Pa., 50
Hadley, Leon and Susian, Lincoln, Neb., 60
Halt, Elmer and Joyce, North Liberty, Ind., 60
Henn, Robert and Margaret, Trotwood, Ohio, 50
Hillsamer, Harry and Lois, Brethren, Mich., 50
Hochstedler, Lewis and Marilyn, Nappanee, Ind., 50
Holtry, Clarence and Vivian,

Shippensburg, Pa., 50
Hoover, Warren and Ruth, Fort Washington, Md., 60
Juday, Donald and Margaret, New Paris, Ind., 60
Kyger, Bill and Dorothy, Timberville, Va., 55
Landes, Olen and Alice, Harrisonburg, Va., 70
Lewis, Richard and Doris, Harrisburg, Pa., 55
Mason, John and Peggy, Charlottesville, Va., 50
Miller, Delbert and Eva, Goshen, Ind., 50
Miller, Vernon and Marjorie, North Manchester, Ind., 65
Mueller, Harold and Romy, Modesto, Calif., 50
Peiffer, James and Blanche, Quakertown, Pa., 60
Racey, Melvin and Annabel, Woodstock, Va., 50
Ridgway, Jesse and Dorothy, Connellsville, Pa., 55
Rinehart, Don and Marilyn, Dayton, Ohio, 50
Rippeon, Charles and Jane, Mount Airy, Md., 55
Schechter, Joseph and Ferne, La Verne, Calif., 50
Stern, Alvin and Ardyth, San Diego, Calif., 50
Stine, Rick and Nancy, Mount Airy, Md., 55
Stiver, Robert and Marge, Goshen, Ind., 65
Strayer, Ray and Katherine, Baltimore, Md., 70
Strohm, David and Mary, Modesto, Calif., 50
Stump, Paul and June, North Liberty, Ind., 65
Thompson, Ken and Charleen, Freeport, Mich., 60
Thompson, R. Jan and Roma Jo, Mesa, Ariz., 50
Thorne, J. Virgil and Shelley, Capon Bridge, W.Va., 50
Tritt, Clair and Mary, Carlisle, Pa., 60
Turner, Bill and Rachel, Broadway, Va., 55
Wampler, Weldon and Catherine, Bridgewater, Va., 65
Warfield, Roland and Dorothy, Frederick, Md., 60
Wort, Gene and Mary Jo, Sebring, Fla., 55
Zullinger, Warren and Chloe, Newburg, Pa., 60

Deaths

Baer, John, 87, Friedens, Pa., Jan. 18
Baughman, Olive, 91, Saint Petersburg, Fla., May 11
Bollinger, Jeanette, 81, New Paris, Ind., June 10
Born, Louise, 93, Cerro Gordo, Ill., June 25
Bowman, Raymond W., 86, Springfield, Ill., May 20
Boyer, Kenneth, 67, Carlisle, Pa., April 22
Brower, Grace, 85, South English, Iowa, June 1
Buzard, Floy Mackey, 96, Girard, Kan., Feb. 5

Cawood, Esther L., 96, Greenville, Ohio, May 15
Clark, Thurman, 77, West Salem, Ohio, May 25
Coblentz, Wilfred Fay, 87, Mount Morris, Ill., June 6
Coffman, Susan, 42, South English, Iowa, June 21
Colvin, Woodrow, 96, Manassas, Va., March 15
Cooper, Carleton, 91, Saint John, Kan., June 1
Cox, Clefa, 94, Kansas City, Mo., May 31
Cripe, Myrtle, 95, Cerro Gordo, Ill., May 25
Dailey, Charles, 48, Bunker Hill, W.Va., July 27, 2006
Deal, Leroy Thomas, 82, Fort Wayne, Ind., March 3
Detwiler, Willis, 93, Bedford, Pa., June 28
Dorsey, Madeline, 84, Woodbine, Md., Feb. 18
Drake, Crystal, 45, Harrisburg, Pa., Sept. 5, 2006
Dunbar, Delbert Wayne, 75, Britton, Mich., May 8
Dutrow, Margaret, 97, Myersville, Md., March 25
Eberwein, Treva E., 85, Arcanum, Ohio, Jan. 24
Egbert, Ruth Ann Bratton, 71, McCune, Kan., June 15
Eikenberry, Phil, 64, Scottville, Mich., May 11
Eisentrou, James W., 91, Bruceton Mills, W.Va., May 24
Eller, Vernard M., 79, La Verne, Calif., June 18
Focht, Thelma F., 85, Hollidaysburg, Pa., May 21
Foulke, Raymond, Sr., 84, Quakertown, Pa., March 24
Fries, Ruby, 96, Manassas, Va., April 20
Gass, Juell, 84, Mountain Grove, Mo., July 4
Gove, Eric, 49, Lititz, Pa., June 27
Green, Berniece Yager, 67, Beaverton, Mich., April 28
Groff, Mary Joan, 66, Arcola, Pa., Dec. 29
Haltermann, Charlotte E., 79, Harrisonburg, Va., May 2
Harris, Robert Harold, 89, Camp Hill, Pa., Jan. 20
Hartman, Galen W., 95, Annville, Pa., April 11
Harvey, George W., 79, Pittsburg, Kan., Jan. 25
Hetrick, Kenneth, 87, Frederick, Md., April 8
Hiller, Martha Jane Leonard, 75, McCune, Kan., May 2
Hixson, Maude B., 93, New Carlisle, Ohio, May 26
Hoffman, Ruth, 81, Mount Airy, Md., March 11
Hoffman, Vern S., 84, Sebring, Fla., March 8
Hogancamp, Gilbert, 82, Independence, Mo., March 17
Horst, Harry L., 77, Orrville, Ohio, Nov. 24
Hutchinson, Nancy, 68, New Carlisle, Ohio, June 17
Jarrels, Mary Catherine, 88, Bridgewater, Va., June 11

As the church turns

One of our local youth recently introduced me to a fast-reading book series that recounts the adventures of a group of "Travelers." These Travelers, as the name suggests, spend their days traveling to a variety of worlds across time and space.

The Travelers' mission? Simple: to maintain order in the universe. Their primary protagonist is an evil entity whose aim is to introduce chaos into each world, gradually turning all the worlds to his insidious purposes. He does so when each world is at a "turning point," a period in which some combination of historical, cultural, or other events leaves that world at a vulnerable juncture.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

If the people of that world come together and work out an equitable solution, the world moves on and flourishes. If not, then the desired chaos will ensue.

While reading, it struck me that the Church of the Brethren could be the subject of one of the books. It certainly feels as if our denomination may be at a significant turning point of its own.

At this summer's Annual Conference delegates faced a mountain of business related to the structure of the denomination, health insurance for pastors, the scheduling of Annual Conference, our declining membership numbers, and a host of other topics. While a good spirit generally prevailed, there

God's work? Can we find new synergy and renewal in partnerships and simplified structures that are also cost-efficient? Can we accomplish some of the rich fellowship and connection aspects of Annual Conference without sinking huge sums of money into convention centers and hotels every year?

And in regards to our numbers and statistics, can we embrace the call of this year's Annual Conference to reach out to groups that don't neatly fit in or look like "standard" Brethren congregations? Can we pursue the call to be better disciples more concerned with the depth of our body than its width? Can we connect our unique message to meet the unique needs of today's world?

Do we flourish or fall into chaos? I wish I could tell you to keep reading for the answers, but they can't be found in any magazine or a book about Travelers or even a church self-help book. They can only come from scripture, from a soul-searching look inside ourselves, and from our collective discernment of God's word to us. Bringing those elements into unity has long been a hallmark of Brethren at their best.

On a recent road trip, a commercial aired numerous times on the radio advertising a new and improved ant poison. Apparently one ant carries the poison into the colony, and it infects them all, affecting the ants' breeding capabilities. The result, as the announcer proclaimed in ominous tones: "They all die!"

In the face of challenges, it would be easy for poisonous thoughts to infect our little anthill. The eventual result, as with those real ants, would inevitably be death. But in our Conference worship this year and in the ongoing message of the Gospels we hear instead the invitation to life—to an

At every chaotic crossroads is the cross. At every turning point is the opportunity to turn our eyes back to the One who is the way. At the depth of our vulnerability is the opening to be shaped by God's hand.

also seemed to be some sense of internal struggle. Caught between the hopes and dreams of what might be and the reality of what is, where do we go from here?

In regards to our pastors, do we come together and find a way to provide for all, so that those who have enough or more than enough partner with those who lack? Do congregations with resources to spare bolster those that are hanging on by their financial fingernails?

In regards to our agencies and conferences, do we cling to traditional forms or do we look creatively at new ways to do

equally contagious abundant life in Christ.

At every chaotic crossroads is the cross. At every turning point is the opportunity to turn our eyes back to the One who is the way. At the depth of our vulnerability is the opening to be shaped by God's hand.

In the words of columnist Max Lerner, "The turning point in the process of growing up is when you discover the core of strength within you that survives all hurt." Even as we approach the 300th birthday of our denominational journey, Brethren may need to "grow up" once more.—Ed.

COMING IN OCTOBER: Auction action for disaster relief, stories of spirituality, letting our lights shine, wrestling with racism, Bible study on the book of Micah, 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.

Bridgewater College

Bridgewater, Virginia
www.bridgewater.edu

University of La Verne

La Verne, California
www.ulv.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary

Richmond, Indiana
www.bethanyseminary.edu

Elizabethtown College

Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.etc.edu

Manchester College

North Manchester, Indiana
www.manchester.edu

BCA

Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.bcaabroad.org

Juniata College

Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
www.juniata.edu

McPherson College

McPherson, Kansas
www.mcpherson.edu

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN HIGHER EDUCATION



NEW OPPORTUNITIES



Called... to love all

Llamados... a amar a todos

Widening the circle of God's love

Ampliando el círculo del amor de Dios

"... And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Hebrews 10:24 - NIV

As stewards of the grace of God, we are called to carry gospel love into the world. Your generous gifts to the World Mission Offering help surround the world with that unconditional love.

Please give lovingly!

"...Y considerémonos unos a otros para estimularnos al amor y a las buenas obras."

Hebreos 10:24

Como administradores de la gracia de Dios, somos llamados a llevar el evangelio de amor al mundo. Sus ofrendas generosas hacen posible el compartir el amplio amor de Dios con muchas personas en todo el mundo.

¡Le rogamos que ofrende amorosamente!

