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of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2008 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



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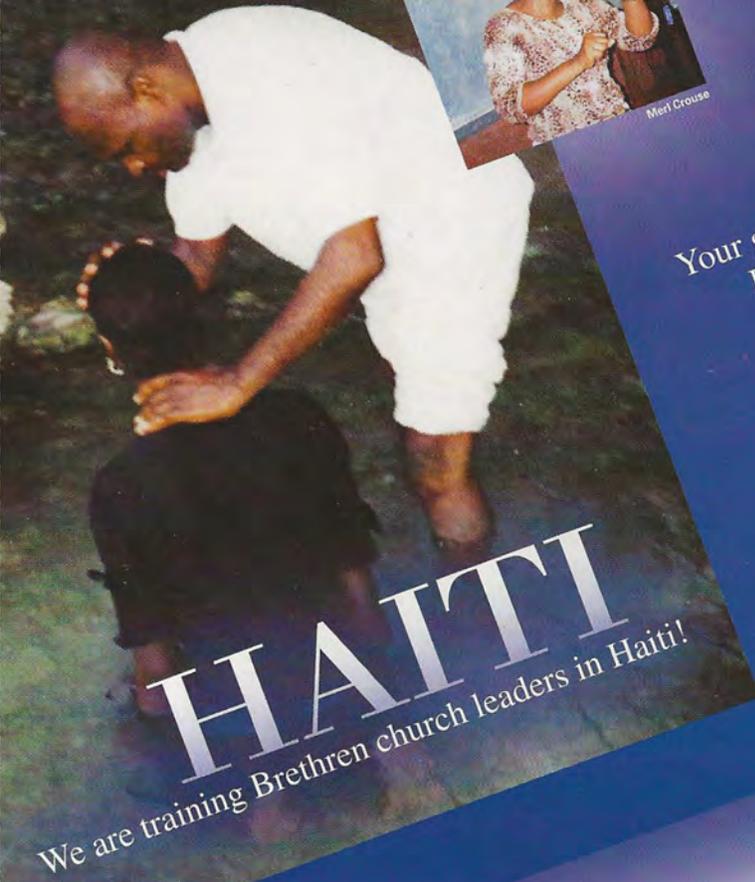
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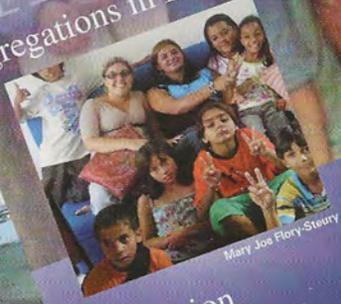


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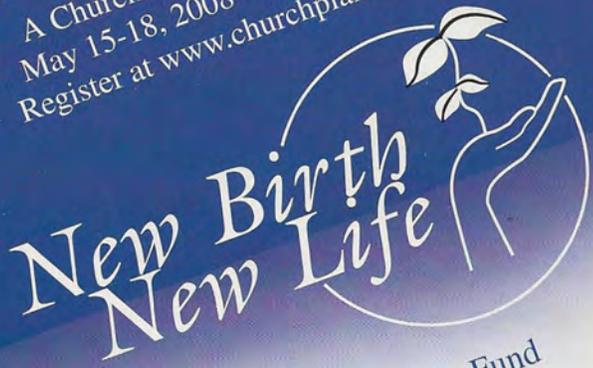


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“... publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Psa. 26:7b KJV).

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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8 300 years of being Brethren: New steps in the new world (1758-1808)

MESSENGER's 300th anniversary heritage series continues with the next 50 years of Brethren history. This month's cluster of articles includes profiles on Brethren leaders Christopher Sauer (p. 8) and Alexander Mack Jr. (p. 10), and the story of Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Cloister (p. 13).

14 And the survey says ...

More than 20 years ago, Brethren sociologist Carl Bowman conducted an in-depth survey of the denomination. He recently concluded an updated survey called the Brethren Member Profile, and he found some troubling trends.

16 A global sense of being Brethren

In Nigeria, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere, the Church of the Brethren has taken root in a variety of other cultures through mission efforts. These churches have all embraced the essence of Brethren identity, yet each has put its own fresh face on what living that identity means.

20 Matthew: Good news for God's people

Are you a teacher? Then Matthew is the perfect Gospel for you. Bethany Theological Seminary dean Stephen Breck Reid says Matthew's format and style makes it a teacher-friendly account of Jesus' life and ministry. Teacher or not, anyone can find rich narratives in this first book of the Christian New Testament.

Courtesy of Brethren Historical Library and Archives



ONTHECOVER

From 1758 to 1808: Brethren activity centered in southeastern Pennsylvania over the last half of the 18th century, from the growing church at Germantown (pictured) led by Alexander Mack Jr. and Christopher Sauer to evangelistic mission journeys into the lands beyond. Bit by bit, Brethren built their identity in the "New World."

Photo by Glenn Riegel.

DEPARTMENTS

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A few years ago there was an effort in my congregation to conduct a modest survey of our members. We wanted to check our assumptions and learn more about who we really were. The plan was to use this new self-awareness to improve our outreach efforts. We developed a simple questionnaire with requests for basic demographic information along with questions about what attracted individuals to this congregation and what they valued most about the Church of the Brethren. Unfortunately, only a handful of people returned the survey.

Maybe we could have improved the response rate if we had made the survey harder. When Carl Bowman (see p. 14) pitched a demanding 18 pages of questions to some 3,000 people across the Church of the Brethren, an impressive 1,800 of them responded. That's a gold mine of scientifically collected data.

It's a gold mine, but the conclusions aren't particularly shiny. It turns out that we Brethren are even less distinguishable than we were 20 years ago and we're not at all clear about why we should be. We like to call ourselves Brethren but don't agree on what that means.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Perhaps it's some consolation that the less-aculturated Mennonites (whose report of their parallel survey has been published in the 2007 *Road Signs for the Journey*, by Conrad Kanagy) are seeing similar trends. "The Mennonite Church USA is now facing virtually all of the same challenges amply documented among the larger Protestant denominations," observes John D. Roth in his foreword. "Mennonites today are less able to articulate theological distinctives, they are less inclined to support conference and denominational leadership, and they are more likely to regard Mennonite beliefs as an impediment to the message of the gospel."

Our own Brethren report will be out soon, and we'll all be able to read and ponder the results. That book, titled *Portrait of a People: The Church of the Brethren at 300*, will eventually be followed by a DVD of resources to help congregations make practical use of the survey results.

As the information makes its way across the church, those of you reading these words will have a special responsibility: There's a strong correlation between those who read MESSENGER and those who embrace the distinctiveness of the Church of the Brethren. That means MESSENGER readers can lead the rest of the Brethren into the future. Those who read MESSENGER, who attend Brethren camps and colleges, who connect with Annual Conference, and who otherwise immerse themselves in Brethren "thickening" agents (to use Bowman's term) must help the church discern God's yearning for the Brethren. Not in an attempt to be culturally Brethren (which used to just come naturally to us), but to extricate ourselves from being mere cultural Christians.

Wendy McFadden

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Somerset moves to a new home

Congregation's \$2.3 million facility progressed quickly

Somerset (Pa.) Church of the Brethren realized miraculous dreams and answers to a multitude of prayers in 2007 with the completion of their new church facilities.

From the beginning of construction in late September 2006 to June 17, 2007, when Pastor Mark S. Bendes preached the first morning message in the new house of worship, the 24,000-square-foot structure was constructed on a 7.3-acre tract of land that the congregation had purchased as part of its major relocation project.

The exterior precast, concrete walls were placed starting Oct. 4, 2006, and were completed in three days. The surrounding community marveled at how quickly the new church was rising. Throughout the construction process, congregational volunteers held work nights to aid in construction, painting, and landscaping.

The new edifice features a 286-seat sanctuary with sloping floor, baptismal, and multi-media audio-visual equipment. The complex also features a social hall with a spacious gathering area and a wing housing Sunday school classrooms and nursery space. The facility is heated and cooled with geothermal heat pumps, offering greater comfort in all seasons for the church membership of more than 300.

At the main entrance pillars are two cornerstones: one from the original two-story stone church constructed in Somerset in 1921 (which needed extensive structural maintenance and repairs), and a matching cornerstone to mark the new 2007 house of worship. Chris Forry and Dean Barron served as co-chairs of the building committee, working with numerous committees and the building contractors to make decisions in the building project, which cost about \$2.3 million.

A stipulation made by the congregation when they approved the building plan was to have two-thirds of the funds on hand before the construction could get under way. A large percentage of the needed funds were obtained through negotiations with Somerset Hospital to purchase the old church building and its surrounding parking area. A medical center now occupies the site.

A large group of members and visitors from the community participated in dedication and consecration services on Sept. 23. Bendes shared the morning message, and Robert W. Neff, former general secretary and past Juniata College president, shared the message for the afternoon service. All former living ministers also participated.—Mark Bendes



Northeast Southern Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic districts will be doing their annual meat canning project in late March and early April. ... Brian Smith raised \$1,000 for the Indiana (Pa.) Church of the Brethren youth group by getting pledges to run in a marathon in October. Smith finished 272nd out of 3,972 finishers. ... Atlantic Northeast young adults gathered for games and desserts Dec. 27 in Lancaster, Pa.

Southeast Camp Bethel (Fincastle, Va.) held its winter camp for children and youth Dec. 29-30. ... Mary Sink St. John has been called as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for Virgina District effective Jan. 1. ... David Gaver and Chelsea Spade are serving as summer camp coordinators for Shepherd's Spring (Sharpsburg, Md.) in 2008. ... Atlantic Southeast's annual Venture Fun(d) Day will be held March 8 at Camp Ithiel (Gotha, Fla.), featuring the Bittersweet Gospel Band.

Midwest Northern Ohio is creating a 300th anniversary quilt with blocks representing various district congregations. ... A nationally televised *Farm News Show* on WGN was taped in part on the campus of Pinecrest Community, a Church of the Brethren retirement center in Mount Morris, Ill. The segment aired in December. ... Black River Church of the Brethren (Spencer, Ohio) held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new church building Nov. 18. Its previous building was destroyed by fire on Christmas Eve 2006.

Ozarks/Plains Falfurrias (Texas) Church of the Brethren is holding a celebration March 8-9 to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the first Brethren Volunteer Service units in Falfurrias. More than 140 BVS volunteers served there from 1948 to 1968. ... Holmesville (Neb.) Church of the Brethren has begun a new house church outreach ministry to meet needs in the area.

West Pacific Southwest named Richard Hart interim district executive minister as of Jan. 1. Hart filled the same position about five years ago. ... A disaster relief auction held during Oregon/Washington's district conference raised \$4,059.50 to aid local and national rebuilding projects and help disaster volunteers with transportation expenses. ... A spiritual growth weekend for older adults is being held April 4-6 in Encino, Calif., on the theme of "spiritual eldering."

BY THE NUMBERS

1 million

Approximate number of people connected with the six major Brethren groups worldwide, according to a report by Dale Stoffer in *The Brethren Evangelist* (the magazine of The Brethren Church). The majority of that group is located outside the US.



"Let us use every whit and fiber of our being to witness to the fullness of God in Jesus Christ in the midst of great challenges and opportunities."

—from the Virgina District fall 2007 prayer calendar

Goshen City coat drive spreads winter warmth

Recently members and friends of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren combined their resources in an effort to follow the biblical model of clothing those in need. Recognizing that often people have more coats in their closet than necessary, the Mission Team pulled together an idea of donating coats leading up to the season of frigid temperatures.

Well ahead of time, church members were encouraged to search their closets—even to dry clean coats that could be given away. Several members did this, arriving with freshly cleaned coats still in dry cleaner bags. Some members who knew they would not be available to attend worship on the actual day of the drive stopped by the church well ahead of time.

One member donated a coat that she had purchased from a prominent leather store and had rarely worn. "At one point I'd hoped to lose enough weight to fit in this coat," Martha Steury shared that Sunday. "Later I realized that this wasn't possible, so I brought it to share with someone who will use it to keep warm this winter."

During worship on Oct. 21, church members arrived with their coats for



Yvonne Riege

Matt Riege, right, and other Goshen City members bring forward coats during a special drive to share some warmth for the winter.

donation in hand and carried them to their pews. While singing "I Will Sing of My Redeemer," members brought their coats forward as an act of love and service. The congregation brought forward 68 coats, surprising all on the Mission Team by their generous response.

Along with the coats brought to the building, the Mission Team provided another opportunity for congregational members to give. During the announcement time Oct. 21, a Salvation Army Thrift Store gift certificate was held high by the pastor. Worshipers were informed that for \$5 they could purchase a certificate that would allow an individual to pick out their own coat at the Salvation Army Thrift Store. This would enable families with small children also to have coats through this drive, since most of those donated were adult sizes. Ninety-one certificates were donated, meaning more than 150 people were able to have warmth this winter because of the love of church members.—**Yvonne Riege**

Shepherd's Spring to build a Heifer Global Village

Heifer International and Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center have formally signed a letter of agreement to establish a Heifer Global Village at Shepherd's Spring. Shepherd's Spring is a camp and conference center of Mid-Atlantic District located near Sharpsburg, Md.

"Heifer started with the Church of the Brethren, so we're glad to bring it full circle," said Ann Cornell, Shepherd's Spring administrator.

On Sept. 30, Shepherd's Spring hosted a groundbreaking event on its 220-acre campus to bless the land and prepare the site. The day also included an open house, a parade, and dedication of the newly paved entrance road. The camp hoped to secure the building permits for the first of the Global Village homes—representing Guatemala—by the end of 2007.

Over a five-year period, an estimated 38,000 people will learn about world



Dean Wenger

Open-air baptisms: Brethren in at least two locations went outdoors for baptisms this past year (before winter set in!). At right, Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren holds its annual outdoor service during the summer on the farm of Charlie and Evelyn Miller. Ron and Ann Stanfield provided music on guitar and dulcimer. The baptisms were followed by a picnic, with more than 250 people attending. A setup crew of 30 did the preparations. At left, Camp Blue Diamond—the camp for Middle Pennsylvania District, located near Petersburg, Pa.—hosts a double baptism in its lake. Pastor Janet Sell of Snake Spring Valley Church of the Brethren baptized Joe and Kim Payne.



Ann Clayton

hunger and Heifer's mission through the programs at Shepherd's Spring. It has been a part of Heifer's Learning Center expansion process since December 2003, working to become a pilot Heifer Global Village community sponsor that builds and operates a Heifer Global Village at its own expense.

In this model, Heifer will provide Shepherd's Spring with the program curriculum, staff training, construction plans for the Global Village, marketing support, and an annual operations review and program evaluation. Shepherd's Spring will meet Heifer's standards and will provide funding and staffing for the sites and programs.

Through donations, Shepherd's Spring raised \$200,000 to pave the entrance road. It estimates a total cost of \$120,000 to construct the village. Shepherd's Spring will pay for construction expenses through donations and grants, and plans to cover operational expenses through program fees and donations.

'Control patients' receive tour, and thanks, from NIH

On September 8, 25 former normal control patients and their family members met at The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Md., for a reunion. They recalled their experiences while serving under the sponsorship of either Brethren Volunteer Service or Mennonite Central Committee between 1954 and 1975.

During the war years of conscription by draft, serving as a volunteer in medical research, rather than military service, was a powerful expression of choosing "another way of living." Many young women also served at NIH.

Jim Conrad of Perkasio, Pa., spearheaded the reunion. It included a tour of the Clinical Center where volunteers stayed during their service. The center is no longer used for patient care but it retains much of the character and features from when it was home to the volunteers, who often shared a room with patients who were there with specific disorders being studied. The tour also included a tour of the new Clinical Center built in 2005, with a comparison of the technologies.

Several presentations by NIH investigators explained how specific studies in which volunteers participated have helped to bring about important advances in

understanding diseases. Standardized tests of attention, which have been cited in medical literature more than 1,000 times, were established by the help of normal volunteers in a 1956 study with the use of sleep deprivation and stress stimulation. Many cardiovascular and lipid concepts, now taken for granted and taught in medical school, were major findings in the 1960s.

Dr. John Gallin, director of the Clinical Center, had high praise for the volunteers. "We will never be able to thank you appro-

priately," he said. "Your contributions to society have been enormous."

Many of those in attendance expressed how their lives had been influenced by their service at NIH. Many went into social work, medical careers, and various forms of church work, including pastoring. Several couples first met at NIH and later got married.

There was time to share stories, photos and other memorabilia. The reunion was concluded with a dinner together at a local restaurant.—**Jim Conrad**

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Kay Kensinger**, a Brethren resident of the Brethren Home Community in Windber, Pa., celebrated her 100th birthday Nov. 12. The second of 11 children, she has lived in Pennsylvania and Virginia.

• **Evelyn H. Janney**, a member of the federated Stonewall Brethren/Methodist Church in Floyd, Va., was elected Nov. 28 to a second three-year term on the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation board of directors.

• The Church of the Brethren now has a second ordained black female pastor, joining 2007 Annual Conference moderator Belita Mitchell. **Mary Fleming**, pastor of the Prince of Peace American Baptist/Brethren congregation in Sacramento, Calif., had her ordination recognized by the Church of the Brethren this past year. She was originally ordained in the American Baptist Churches USA.

• **Camp Mardela** (Denton, Md.), which earned American Camp Association accreditation this past year, will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2008.

• **Codorus Church of the Brethren** (Loganville, Pa.) is marking its 250th anniversary in 2008 with a variety of events planned over a year-long celebration.

• **Middle River Church of the Brethren** (New Hope, Va.) is celebrating its rebuilt sanctuary following a fire that destroyed sections of the church more than a year ago. The Nov. 7, 2006, fire destroyed the sanctuary roof and the whole building suffered smoke damage. "After 13 months of prayer and about \$1.5 million, the new sanctuary now boasts high, wooden ceilings, fine furniture, and a fresh coat of paint," a report from WVIR-TV of Charlottesville, Va., said. The first service in the sanctuary took place Dec. 9.

• The **Una Nueva Vida En Cristo Fellowship**, a new church plant near Willis, Va., was officially chartered as a fellowship during a service on Dec. 21. General Board Congregational Life Team member Ruben DeOleo was the featured speaker.

• The Brethren Church (based in Ashland, Ohio) is observing the 300th anniversary of the Brethren movement with a **traveling historical display**. The roving trailer is currently scheduled to make stops in Arizona, California, Wyoming, Kansas, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Florida from February to May.

REMEMBERED

• **Robert C. Walker**, former interim executive director of the Southern California Council of Churches and former director of church relations for the University of La Verne (Calif.), died Nov. 10 in La Verne. A memorial service was held Nov. 17 at La Verne Church of the Brethren. Walker, a graduate of La Verne and the Claremont Colleges, also taught school and was a violinist in several local symphonies.

• **Janice Lee Jarrett**, one of the first women to obtain the rank of colonel with the US Customs and Border Protection Service, died Nov. 26. Jarrett, 63, was a member of Bassett (Va.) Church of the Brethren, where she was formerly choir director and organist. During her career, she served in Florida, the Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas.

Stuck in Groundhog Day

It's February—and, baby, it's COLD out there. How are you coping? Every year, in the winter of my discontent, I pop in the 1993 classic *Groundhog Day*. It's a cinematic parable—perfect for the season of Epiphany, which is all about enlightenment.

Want to be enlightened? Meet weatherman Phil Connors, a blowhard and a perfect storm. See, Phil is his own little god. He's interested only in his own advancement, comfort, and glory. He's like one of those cartoon characters who carries his own little rainstorm with him wherever he goes. He's sarcastic, grumpy, and just plain mean. No one likes Phil—not even Phil.



PAULA BOWSER

He's nice only when it will reap tangible rewards. With women, Phil's philosophy is "love 'em and leave 'em." His one redeeming characteristic is a great sense of humor. Otherwise, he's a walking depression. If you hang out with Phil, you can expect low tempera-

tures and murky clouds. Chance of rain? 100 percent.

Groundhog Day starts out bad and gets worse. Phil is accosted by an aggressive salesman and steps into a deep puddle of ice water trying to escape. He hates his repetitious job. A freak snowstorm arrives, and he's forced to remain in Punxsutawney overnight. He gets smacked in the head with a snow shovel. He drowns his sorrows at the bar and ends the

Then he becomes interested in Rita, his producer. He tries to seduce her by finding out more about her each day and pretending to share her likes and opinions.

When she (wisely) rejects him, he gives up on life, attempting suicide in a variety of ways, but there is no exit. Each morning he awakens to the now-ominous strains of "I Got You Babe."

Finally the real transformation begins, as Phil makes the slow journey from an egocentric jerk into a man with a soul. He changes flat tires and saves a kid who falls out of the tree at the same time every day. He feeds an old bum. He starts to like Rita for herself.

Phil becomes adventurous. He takes piano lessons and learns how to ice-sculpt. Rita finally warms up to the good person he's becoming. In a way never possible before his ordeal, he breaks through to being a genuine lover—not just of Rita, but the gift of life. His curse becomes a blessing.

There are burning questions here, one being: Have you seen your shadow? Most of us don't want to face our dark side. We would rather remain unenlightened.

A second question has to do with being stuck. At one point Phil says, "What would you do if you were stuck in one place and every day was exactly the same and nothing you did mattered?"

GREAT question. Even if we're NOT in a time warp, we all know what it feels like to be stuck: Stuck in sick relationships. Stuck in our addictions. Stuck in jobs or commitments that kill our joy. Stuck inside of our own boring constructs. The good news is that God is in the business of getting us UN-stuck, if we're willing.

EVEN IF WE'RE NOT IN A TIME WARP, WE ALL KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE STUCK: STUCK IN SICK RELATIONSHIPS. STUCK IN OUR ADDICTIONS. STUCK IN JOBS OR COMMITMENTS THAT KILL OUR JOY. STUCK INSIDE OF OUR OWN BORING CONSTRUCTS. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT GOD IS IN THE BUSINESS OF GETTING US UN-STUCK, IF WE'RE WILLING.

day alone with an icy shower and an empty bed.

Then something really weird begins to happen. February 3rd never comes. The next morning he's forced to relive the day from hell. Every morning from now on is Groundhog Day, and it starts with Sonny and Cher singing "I Got You, Babe," at exactly 6 a.m.

This is Phil's private hell. Everyone else greets the day with joy, ready to embrace life and dance the Pennsylvania Polka. But for Phil, every morning it's back to square one. Only Phil can change; others walk through their routines oblivious to his plight. They change only as he changes. The film shows 34 separate Groundhog Days and suggests that there have been thousands more. And Phil must endure every single one till he gets it right.

At first Phil uses his new situation to do outrageous things. He proposes to a beautiful woman knowing he'll never have to marry her; he socks the annoying salesman. There are no consequences, but there's no satisfaction either, and no change.

Or we might ask why does God have me right here right now? What can God teach me in the flypaper years, where I'm not moving or growing?

Finally we may ask, what if there was no tomorrow? Some believe we have an infinite number of chances to get it right. It doesn't really matter what we do or don't do, because we'll have ten thousand more chances to move forward.

But what if we don't? The New Testament indicates that we have one life (Heb. 9:27). Therefore every choice counts. If we pass by a hungry man and do nothing he remains hungry, and part of our soul sickens and dies. If we don't get involved in peacemaking and justice the world grows darker every day. It's not really about getting it right—only Jesus did that! But in the words of poet Mary Oliver we can ask ourselves, "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" **W**

Paula Bowser is pastor of Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren.

QUOTE WORTHY

“One thing we know about sheep—sheep sometimes bite!”

—Quinter (Kan.) Church of the Brethren pastor Keith Funk, introducing a time of blessing and prayer for district pastors

“Even though scripture speaks very positively about aging, we live in a culture where people try to defy getting older. We do everything we possibly can to avoid it, because we see growing older as useless or disposable.”

—the Rev. Rick Gentzler, director of the Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries for the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Discipleship, in an interview with *The United Methodist Reporter*

“We can no longer be silent or make excuses for violent and abusive behavior. Nor can we continue to allow bad theology to justify bad behavior.”

—the Rev. Leslie Copeland-Tune, assistant director of the National Council of Churches USA Washington Office, speaking in October about domestic violence

“Truly, the genius of the Church of the Brethren is its diversity. The miracle of the Church of the Brethren is its nearly 300 years of existence, despite the creative tension that exists when such diversity develops within the context of Christian community.”

—Codus Church of the Brethren (Loganville, Pa.) pastor Rick Fischl, writing in the congregation’s August 2007 newsletter

“We estimate that the church in the US is spending almost \$700 million a year on forced pastoral turnover.”

—Ken Sande of Peacemaker Ministries, discussing congregational conflict. He was quoted in *Church Executive* magazine

“When people talk about further destabilization of the region and you read some American political advisors speaking of action against Syria and Iran, I can only say that I regard that as criminal, ignorant, and potentially murderous folly.”

—Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion. He was quoted by the BBC. (RNS)

CULTURE REVIEW

• **Beliefnet**, one of the leading US websites devoted to religion and spirituality, is under new management as part of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp. and the Fox Entertainment Group. The deal, announced Dec. 4, gives Beliefnet a new sense of permanence after it emerged from bankruptcy protection five years ago. The site is now profitable and gets 3 million unique visitors each month.

• Filmmaker Martin Doblmeier screened his new documentary, **“The Power of Forgiveness,”** in Blacksburg, Va., Sept. 16. He was invited by a group created to help Virginia Tech students and local citizens process what happened and to heal in the aftermath of the shootings that took the lives of 33 students earlier this year. The film was being scheduled for broadcast on public television in early 2008. It shows the physical,

mental, and spiritual benefits that can come with forgiveness.

• The National Council of Churches USA’s Eco-Justice Program is offering a new **creation-friendly building guide** titled, “Building A Firm Foundation: A Creation Friendly Guide for Churches.” The resource is designed to support churches in building structures faithfully and sustainably. It can be downloaded at www.ncccojustice.org/gbbounce.html.

• The US Department of Agriculture’s annual **study on hunger in America** showed that the number of people living in households with “food insecurity”—where their normal diets changed due to lack of food or money—increased from 35.1 million in 2005 to 35.5 million in 2006. (RNS)



JUST FOR FUN: QUIZ

GLOBAL POVERTY How much do you know about global poverty? Test your knowledge with these true/false statements. Answers are printed below:

- T F 1.** There has been little progress made in reducing global poverty in the last decade.
- T F 2.** The US gives more money per capita to help alleviate poverty than any other nation.
- T F 3.** Overpopulation is part of why sub-Saharan Africa is so poor.
- T F 4.** Malaria kills more children in Africa than any other disease.
- T F 5.** Obesity threatens the life expectancy of some developed countries.
- T F 6.** The main job of the United Nations is to help the poor of the world.
- T F 7.** The poorest people in the world are most likely to become terrorists.
- T F 8.** Prostitution is illegal in most of the world.
- T F 9.** Child labor is mostly found in sweatshops.
- T F 10.** Illegal immigration is having a negative effect on the US economy.

Answers

1. **FALSE.** Over the past decade, much progress has been made on many fronts to reduce poverty; improve living conditions of the poor, and help increase health and education.; 2. **FALSE.** While the US gives the most amount of money overall, it does not rank in the top 20 in per-capita giving to the poor.; 3. **FALSE.** Sub-Saharan Africa is not densely populated except in a few major cities.; 4. **TRUE.** Approximately 3,000 children die each day from malaria.; 5. **TRUE.** More than 300 million people worldwide suffer from obesity and related health conditions.; 6. **FALSE.** It was originally founded to prevent future wars and still exists primarily to facilitate cooperation among countries in a variety of areas.; 7. **FALSE.** Most of the poorest of the poor lack the energy or resources to do much more than survive daily life. Terrorism tends to come from lower or middle class unrest.; 8. **FALSE.** Prostitution is actually legal in a number of countries and is not actually illegal in some (such as England) although solicitation is.; 9. **FALSE.** According to UNICEF, most children work in agriculture, sell products on the street, or are employed as domestic workers.; 10. **TRUE and FALSE.** Overall, the US needs more workers, and people coming to the US illegally tend to fill jobs in agriculture and other areas. But pockets of the US economy are hurt because of US workers losing their jobs to labor willing to work at a lower cost.

From *The Skeptic’s Guide to Global Poverty* by Dale Hanson Bourke (Authentic Books).



by Kenneth M. Shaffer Jr.

Christopher Sauer Jr.: Faith under fire

Influential printer lost everything during the Revolutionary War

On the night of May 24, 1778, Christopher Sauer Jr., a Brethren minister and printer, was forced from his home in Germantown, Pa., by a party of American soldiers. He was marched through cornfields and when he—being nearly 57 years old—could not keep up with the young soldiers in the dark, he was prodded in the back with bayonets.

The next morning he was forced to remove all his clothes and given pants and a shirt that were so full of holes that they barely covered his body. Then his hair and beard were cut and he was painted red and black, the colors of the British, to show he was loyal to the king and a traitor to the American Revolution. Next Sauer was forced to march barefoot to the American camp where he learned he was accused of being “an

remaining six years of his life working as a bookbinder to help support his younger children and to repay the loans given to him by friends when he was dispossessed.

Before the American Revolution, Christopher Sauer Jr. had presided over the influential Sauer Press, which had been founded by his father. He inherited the press in 1758 when his father died. Under Sauer Jr., the press published two editions (1763 and 1776) of the famous Sauer Bible. He also continued publishing the newspaper and almanac begun by his father. In 1764 he began publishing a religious periodical that he distributed free to those who subscribed to his other publications. This periodical is thought to be the first of a religious nature published in America.

Sauer was born in Germany in 1721 and immigrated to colonial Pennsylvania with his parents in 1724. There is no record

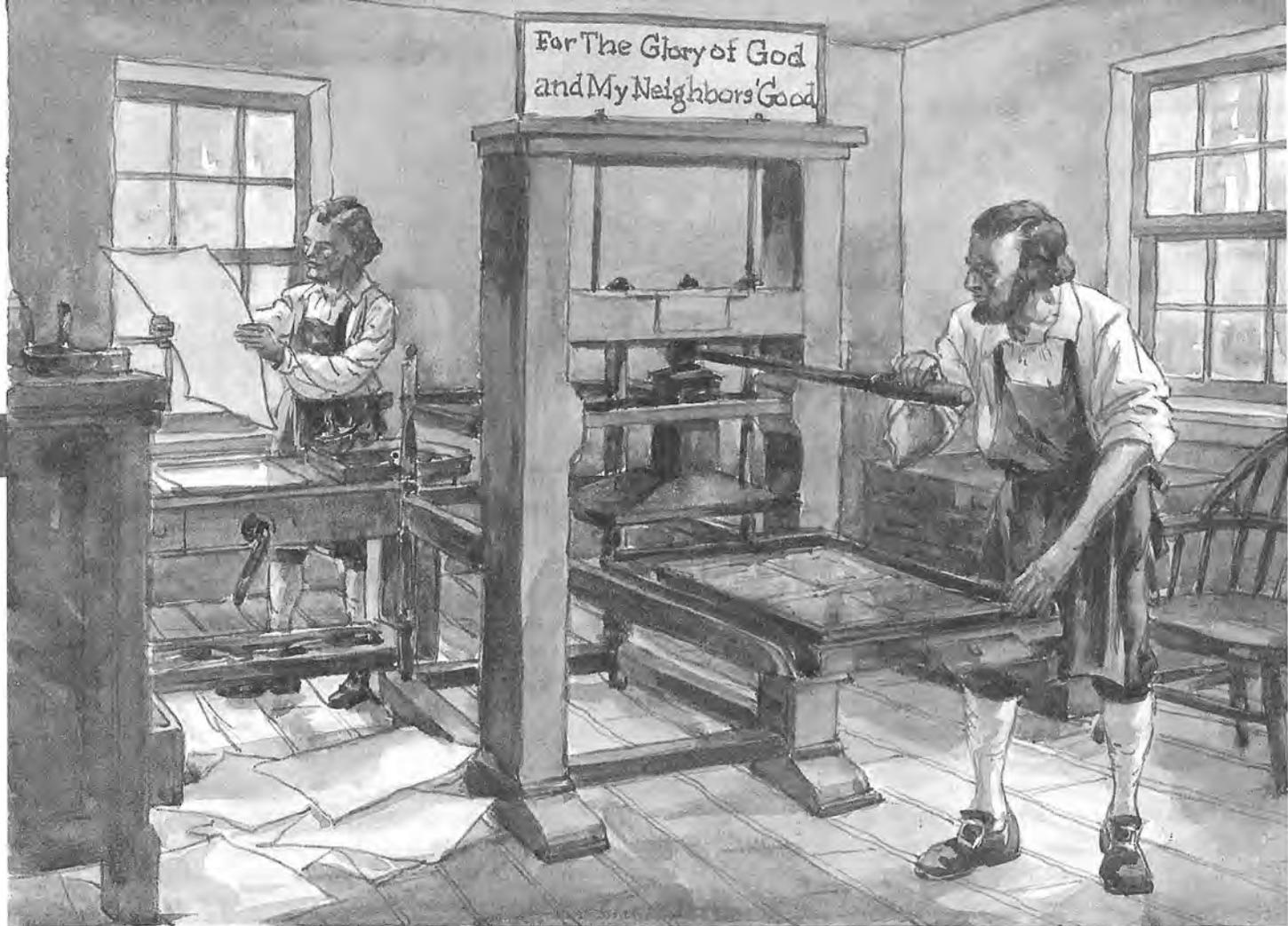
CHRISTOPHER SAUER JR. WAS A WELL-TO-DO MAN WHO LOST EVERYTHING DURING THE REVOLUTION, IN PART BECAUSE OF HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT LOSE THE RESPECT AND LOVE OF THE BRETHREN.

oppressor of the righteous and a spy.” With the help of Gen. Peter Muhlenberg, the son of a Lutheran pastor who knew Sauer, he was eventually released, but not permitted to return to his home in Germantown.

Unfortunately this was not the end of Sauer’s persecution. He was declared a traitor, and two months later all of his property and possessions were confiscated and sold by the revolutionary government, including his printing equipment and household goods. Even his medicines were sold. Sauer spent the

that his father was Brethren, and his mother became a follower of Conrad Beissel and lived at the Ephrata Cloister for more than 12 years. But Sauer joined the Germantown congregation when he was 15, was elected to the ministry at 26, and ordained at age 31. He and Alexander Mack Jr. were good friends, and both were ordained on the same day. Sauer married Catherine Scharpnack in 1751, and Mack Jr. officiated at the ceremony.

When the revolution began, Sauer and the Brethren were



caught in a dilemma. To whom did they owe their allegiance—the English king or the Pennsylvania Assembly that supported the revolution? According to Romans 13:1, they were called to “be subject to the governing authorities”; but to whom or what had God given the authority? In general, Brethren preferred to remain neutral. The Pennsylvania Assembly, however, wanted to force citizens to take a stand and instituted the “test act,” which required white males to swear allegiance to the state of Pennsylvania and renounce the king.

During the summer of 1778, the test act was harshly enforced in parts of Pennsylvania. This no doubt explains in part the persecution of Sauer during that summer, since he refused to take the oath. But there were other factors. First, two of Sauer’s sons definitely supported the British during the revolution, and Sauer had lived with one of his sons in Philadelphia when it was held by the British. Second, Sauer was an influential leader among German-speaking citizens; and the revolutionaries wanted to make an example of him. Third, Sauer was a pacifist and refused to voluntarily support the war. When required to pay taxes to support the war, he said the money was for poor women and children.

Christopher Sauer Jr. was a well-to-do man who lost everything during the revolution, in part because of his religious beliefs. However, he did not lose the respect and

love of the Brethren. He continued to serve as a pastor and visited congregations to preach and ordain deacons and ministers. Even though he lost his wealth and influence, he continued to live according to the motto that is said to have hung in his print shop: “To the glory of God and to my neighbor’s good.” 

(Information taken from: The Brethren in Colonial America, edited by Donald F. Durnbaugh; The Christopher Sauers, by Stephen L. Longenecker; Conscience in Crisis, by Richard K. MacMaster and others; The Brethren Encyclopedia, pp. 1145-1146.)

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AIDED BY A FRIEND

While being forced to march barefoot by the American soldiers, Sauer was given a pair of shoes by a friend. Concerning the incident, Sauer writes: “A friend of mine seeing me in that condition asked them whether they would take the shoes from me if he would give me a pair. The officer gave his word they should not be taken from me if he would give me a pair, and so he took the shoes from his feet and the hat from his head and gave them to me, but after we had marched six miles a soldier came and demanded my shoes and took them and gave me his old slabs which wounded my feet very much.” —from *The Brethren in Colonial America*, edited by Donald F. Durnbaugh, p. 402.





by Frank Ramirez

Alexander Mack Jr.: The tolerant reconciler

'Sander' Mack led Brethren for more than half a century

The story is told that Floyd Mallot, who taught Brethren history at Bethany many decades ago, used to write on the blackboard the dates during which the old Dunkers in Europe decided they needed to practice celibacy. He would then write down the year Alexander Mack Jr. was born to Anna Margaretha Kling Mack and Alexander Mack Sr., two of the original eight.

The birth year fell smack dab in the middle of the celibate period.

The Brethren experiment in celibacy was only temporary. Our ancestors in the faith returned to the scriptures and decided it was not a biblical practice. And while some might chuckle at this proof that

the Brethren remain strong in Colonial America as well as the new nation because he helped model forgiveness and reconciliation. Sander Mack is the patron saint for all of us who are muddling through, who recognize that Jesus Christ is the perfect Lord and the rest of us are just waiting to be perfected.

The early Brethren instituted the ban as part of their understanding of Matthew 18, in order to provide a mechanism for reconciliation. But Mack Sr., who was held in high regard by his contemporaries, may not have been as successful at this as some. There is a record of a harsh outburst directed by the elder Mack at his mentor Hochmann von Hochenau—who himself turned away wrath with gentle words to the effect that when they greeted each other in heaven none of this would matter. The Brethren in Krefeld actually split over the issue of whether one could marry outside the faith. Evidently the senior Mack was unable to reconcile the parties, one group of which then sailed for Pennsylvania in 1719. When the Mack family followed a decade later it was hoped that the

Medford Neher / Courtesy of Camp Alexander Mack



Alexander Mack Jr. and Colonial printer Christopher Sauer II were co-pastors of the Germantown congregation.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS, THE YOUNGER MACK RETURNED TO THE BRETHREN IN 1748 AND WAS RECONCILED AND RESTORED. HE WENT ON TO BECOME A GREAT LEADER WHOSE LETTERS, DAYBOOK, DEVOTIONAL AND DOCTRINAL WRITINGS, AND POETRY REFLECT A DESIRE FOR MODERATION, ACCEPTANCE, AND LOVE.

Brethren occasionally found out the hard way that a particular biblical interpretation was impractical, to my mind it is symbolic of the way Mack Jr. (or "Sander" Mack as he was generally known all his long life), bridged the gap between idealism and realism, perfect practice and practicality.

During this tercentennial year I hear a lot of references to the senior Mack, with good reason. He was a leader of the Brethren in Europe and our first minister. But for my money the reason the Brethren experiment is still going strong has a lot more to do with Junior. The arc of his life story, which included loss, alienation, depression, and restoration, helped

patriarch of the family would be able to heal the rift caused by Conrad Beissel, who founded a cloister in Ephrata and split many Brethren families as some chose to follow him into a celibate lifestyle. However, the description of Mack's encounter with Beissel makes it clear he was unsuccessful. Far from healing the breach, their meeting—contentious to say the least—broadened the divide.

By contrast, Sander Mack had a tremendous influence as a moderating reconciler, a caregiver, and an advocate for the poor and dispossessed. Far from one to draw strict denominational lines, he continued to list individuals as a brother or

Alexander Mack Jr.'s gravestone stands among those of other early Brethren in the Germantown cemetery in Philadelphia.



© Oliver R. Hoegge

sister even if they left the fellowship. All of this, combined with the twists and turns of his long life and varied experiences (he earned his living as a weaver), contributed to and enhanced his reputation for moderation.

Born in Europe in 1712, he suffered the loss of his mother and a sister when he was only 8 years old, while the Mack family struggled to survive as religious refugees. Baptized in 1728, he migrated to Pennsylvania with his father a year later.

Sander left the Brethren for about 12 years following his father's death, overcome by depression, and ironically took up residence for a decade at the cloister under the guidance of his father's adversary, Conrad Beissel. Over time, however, Sander became disillusioned with Beissel's authoritarian ways. After he left the cloister he traveled a great distance on foot with a few friends to set up a spiritual camp on the frontier in western Virginia. But life as a religious hermit proved a failure, and after a warning came to him in a dream he abandoned the solitary lifestyle.

Asking for forgiveness, the younger Mack returned to the Brethren in 1748 and was reconciled and restored. He went on to become a great leader whose letters, daybook, devotional and doctrinal writings, and poetry reflect a desire for moderation, acceptance, and love. Along with the legendary Colonial printer Christopher Sauer II he was co-pastor of the Germantown congregation for the rest of his long life. (The two, in turn, each officiated at the other's wedding.)

No greater example of his temperament can be found than his words at the end of an essay in which he defends a particular order of worship for the love feast, but then reminds his readers that Jesus himself said we should be known as his disciples by our love for each other.

In this appendix to his father's *Rights and Ordinances*, Sander Mack lays out what he believes to be the only proper way to conduct the footwashing portion of the love feast. He had such stature among the Brethren that he could, like Paul, have commanded certain behavior. However, even though he considers his interpretation the correct one, he emphasizes that he would rather concede to someone he considered wrong if that action would help preserve love than maintain his correct interpretation of scripture if it meant driving a wedge between believers.

He goes on to say that he would always give in to others because he "was especially concerned that the love and unity of the church not be lost," reminding his readers that Jesus said that believers would be recognized not by whether they got such details right but "rather that all 'shall know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another.'" The passage continues: "Oh, how Satan could mock us if we were to

quarrel with one another about the time when the feet should be washed, and love would be destroyed. . . . Therefore, dear brethren, let us watch and be careful, and above all preserve love, for thus one preserves light."

Mack's kindness and dedication to serve can be seen in his letters, preserved for the most part in the special collections at Juniata College and printed in Don Durnbaugh's sourcebook *The Brethren in Colonial America*. It was also evident in the way he cared for Johannes Lay in his home from Dec. 15, 1758, until Lay's death on April 25 the following year. Mack injured his back so badly while trying to lift Lay that he had to hire outside help to assist him with his weaving business. By March Lay had contracted gangrene and "the stench was nearly unbearable." Yet Mack continued to provide care at great expense and inconvenience to himself.

Sander Mack and others saw to it that a love fund was collected for the maintenance of the poor in the congregation, and even those beyond the congregation. In his last recorded letter Mack, then age 91 and spiritual leader of the Brethren for more than half a century, wrote to the Germantown congregation—not to sum up his life or make some spiritual point, but to take them to task for not taking care of a widow who needed their aid.

Identifying himself as "an aged stranger and pilgrim on this earth," he admitted that the woman was very difficult and unstable, and though they could not readmit her to the flock, they could care for her. Initially the congregation had decided to give her a measure of flour every month. Then Mack, too weak to go to the council meeting, wrote, "I could not assume then that I would live to see New Year's Day, about four months hence. I did, however, have every right to assume that when the mortal shell of mine is buried, the New Testament is not buried with it. And it is there that the Lord speaks and says: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive!'"

He assumed they would add a pound of butter to the 'quarter' of flour they gave the widow every month, but he learned they took even the flour away. Quoting from an apocryphal book, Sirach 35:25, he said, "The poor man has nothing except a little bread; whoever deprives him of it, is a murderer." These last words of Mack foreshadow the strong Brethren emphasis on service to all that would characterize us in later centuries.

Sander Mack was no stranger to personal tragedy. Among the many family deaths he recorded in his day book, the most poignant was the death of his daughter Anna Marie, who on April 5, 1770, died at age 17 years, 5 months, and 7 days giving birth to a son. Mack suggested he could have been named Benoni, "a son of pain," in remembrance of the story of Benjamin in the book of Genesis, whose birth resulted in his mother Rachel's death. However, he chose to name him Jonas, "who was pulled from the stomach of the whale by the good hand of God as an example of conversion." Four months, five days, and 11 hours later Jonas followed his mother into death, a victim of cholera.

Without Sander Mack much important history would be lost. He wrote the first real history of the Brethren, published as a preface to his father's works. He also left behind an extensive list of Brethren who had died, an historical treasure trove. These, coupled with his published defense of Brethren doctrine and practice, provide the clearest window on the life of the church in both Colonial America and in the new nation.

In every letter, every poem, every essay, it is clear that Mack is motivated by a love for Jesus Christ and a desire to follow him—in the company of other beloved believers.

Small groups like ours can get so caught up in the search for perfection that we can split from each other time and again. The humorist Garrison Keillor, writing about the Sanctified Brethren among whom he grew up, speaks of their insistence on doctrinal purity: "Scholarly to the core and perfect literalists every one, they set to arguing over points that, to any outsider,

would have seemed very minor indeed, but which to them were crucial to the Faith. . . ." He continues, "Once having tasted the pleasure of being Correct and defending True Doctrine, they kept right on and broke up at every opportunity until, by the time I came along, there were dozens of tiny Brethren groups, none of which were speaking to any of the others."

This could easily have been our story. Indeed, you can see this in action in the two splits recently experienced by our Grace Brethren cousins. The fact that splits have been the exception rather than the rule despite a contentious history of theological disagreements in our midst has to be, at least in part, a legacy of Sander Mack.

Beginning in 1772 Mack wrote a poem every year on his birthday. The poems consistently thank God for the years that have been granted and express trust in God and in the future. In addition, he wrote his own simple epitaph, which graces his tombstone. It reads:

*God
Who us of dust did make
And again to dust will take
His wisdom like the sun shall break
When in his likeness we awake!*

Alexander Mack Jr. died in 1803 at the age of 91 years, 1 month, and 20 days. 

Frank Ramirez is pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and author of several books, including *The Love Feast*.



Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Cloister

by Christina Bucher

Elements of radical Pietist community survive today

The Ephrata Cloister, a religious community of radical Pietists, was founded in 1732 by a German immigrant named Conrad Beissel (1691-1768). For a short time, Beissel was a leader of the Brethren congregation at Conestoga, in Pennsylvania; however, he differed with the Brethren on several key points and left the Brethren in order to follow his own distinctive beliefs and practices.

Conrad Beissel. Beissel was born in 1691, in Eberbach am Neckar, in what is now Germany. Orphaned by age 8, Beissel became a baker. Beissel's family belonged to the Reformed tradition; however, as a youth, Beissel encountered radical Pietist groups and became convinced of the truth of their understanding of the Christian life. In his late 20s, Beissel emigrated to the New World, settling first in Germantown

(near Philadelphia). There Beissel associated with Brethren, apprenticing himself to Peter Becker, a weaver and a leader in the Brethren movement.

Beissel soon moved west to Conestoga. In his early 30s, Beissel was baptized by Becker and became a leader of the Brethren at Conestoga. After only four years, however, Beissel withdrew from the congregation, and in 1732 he moved several miles north, settling along the banks of the Cocalico Creek.

The Ephrata Cloister. Beissel was a charismatic leader, and several Brethren chose to follow him to Ephrata, where a religious community arose with Beissel as leader. The religious community at Ephrata, like the Brethren, observed believers baptism, love feast, and footwashing, but they differed from Brethren in other significant ways. Believing that

DESPITE THEIR AUSTERE LIFESTYLE, THE MEMBERS OF THE EPHRATA COMMUNITY PRODUCED BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS, KNOWN AS FRAKTUR, AND ENGAGED IN SINGING HYMNS, MANY OF THEM WRITTEN BY BEISSEL HIMSELF.



Courtesy of Brethren Historical Library and Archives

God had ordained the seventh day as a Sabbath, they observed Saturday as their primary day of worship.

Perhaps more provocatively, Beissel advocated celibacy as a Christian ideal, and the 18th-century community included both male and female celibate members. Despite Beissel's advocacy of celibacy, married individuals—known as householders—also lived as part of the Ephrata community. The monks, nuns, and householders of Ephrata followed a rigorous lifestyle devoted to prayer and worship. Believing that disciplined lives helped them stay close to God, they worked hard, slept and ate little, and enjoyed no luxuries.

Despite their austere lifestyle, the members of the Ephrata community produced beautiful examples of illuminated manuscripts, known as *Fraktur*, and engaged in singing hymns, many of them written by Beissel himself. Community members operated a paper mill, book bindery, oil mill, and tannery. They also ran a printing press for roughly half a century, printing hymnals, Bibles, the Mennonite *Martyr's Mirror*, and other works.

In the 1740s and 1750s, the Ephrata community swelled its ranks to more than 300 members. After Beissel's death in 1768, however, the community lost some of its momentum. The last celibate community member, a nun, died in 1813. The following year, Ephrata householders formed a group known as the German Seventh-Day Baptist Church and continued weekly worship at Ephrata until the early 20th century.

Ephrata today. By the 20th century, the church had aban-

doned, along with the celibate life, many of Beissel's mystically influenced beliefs and practices; however, they continued to observe Saturday as their Sabbath. Time had taken its toll on the 18th-century buildings at Ephrata, and because church members did not have the funds to repair and maintain the historic buildings of the Cloister, they sold the property to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Although the German Seventh-Day Baptists at Ephrata suspended regular worship, two small congregations at Snow Hill (Franklin County, Pa.) and Salemville (Bedford County, Pa.) continue to hold weekly Sabbath services, and members travel twice a year to hold a love feast in the historic meeting house (known as the *Saal*) at the Ephrata Cloister. The Snow Hill and Salemville congregations were established in the 18th century as branch societies of the Ephrata community. Today, the Ephrata Cloister is a National Historic Landmark administered

by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Many of the buildings erected in Beissel's time survive and offer visitors a glimpse into the beliefs and practices of an 18th-century radical Pietist community. ❧

Christina Bucher is dean of faculty and professor of religion at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. She has spent significant time studying the Ephrata community and radical Pietism.



The Ephrata Cloister, founded by Conrad Beissel, has been maintained as a historical and educational site in Lancaster County, Pa.

Courtesy of Brethren Historical Library and Archives

And the survey says...

Brethren sociologist Carl Bowman finds some troubling trends

Carl Bowman, professor of sociology at Bridgewater (Va.) College, directed the Brethren Member Profile 2006, a wide-ranging survey of Church of the Brethren membership. The project, based at Elizabethtown College's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, is part of a multi-pronged Church Member Profile project that also surveyed Mennonite Church USA and the Brethren in Christ. Bowman had conducted a similar survey of Brethren in 1985.

Bowman's new findings have already raised some eyebrows in presentations at an academic conference and a few other settings. A book with full survey results and analysis is expected to be out this spring.

MESSANGER recently interviewed Bowman about his work on the project, and the results.

Tell us a bit about what led you to become involved in this project.

CB: Since the Brethren Profile Study of the mid-'80s, I always thought I'd do a follow-up. I was pretty young at that point. It made a big splash. I figured 15, 20, 25 years later would be a good time to follow up, and I was just looking for the right time. The thing that finally spurred me into action was a call from Donald Kraybill (of the Young Center). . . . He and Conrad Kanagy were interested in doing a follow-up study on Mennonite/Anabaptist profiles that had been done. He asked me whether I was interested in doing a similar follow-up to my earlier Brethren study.

So what were the most striking differences from the 1985 survey?

CB: Thinking in terms of the survey process, the most striking difference was that the informal trust that guided the process in the mid-'80s was different. There is a suspicion about handing over

membership lists, divulging that kind of information. Today, people are bombarded with solicitations. It makes them really hesitant. There are more serious confidentiality and privacy issues, and those weren't really issues in the mid-'80s.

Anything that jumps out from the data you gathered?

CB: One of the findings from the mid-'80s had to do with personal disengagement from the denomination and the declining influence of various organizations in the denomination. That is even more pronounced now in terms of the percentage of Brethren who have been to an Annual Conference, the percentage who think Annual Conference is important, the percentage who subscribe to MESSANGER. All of those things are lower than they were. People are less denominationally attached. That's a pretty basic finding. . . . The good news today is that there isn't as much anger (at denominational institutions) as 20 years ago; the bad news is the reason may be that these organizations are simply more irrelevant than they were 20 years ago.

What other larger trends do you see emerging from the data?

CB: The general conservatism of the membership is more striking now. If you were to ask me what specific questions lead me to this conclusion, I would have to work hard at picking it apart to make the case. What Brethren might do in the event of a draft, for instance, looks pretty much the same as in the mid-'80s. Other questions regarding support for the military, reactions to the war on terror, political alignment, view of placing American flags in the sanctuary—they communicate more of a drift toward a Protestant evangelical mindset that doesn't see the

distinction between Christ and state, between church and state, that Brethren did historically. . . . Many Brethren see little distinction between being a good American and being a good Christian. The two are blurred together.

What does that say about our stance as a historic peace church?

CB: It's astonishing how far Brethren have moved from their historical position. If you go back to previous studies, you see a change from the 1940s to the 1980s, and even more now. More astonishing, perhaps, is the question of whether young people in church should be counseled against military service. It's just a small minority today who think that our young people should be counseled against entering the military. . . . This relates to the denominational disengagement I mentioned earlier. Those who are more engaged—attending Annual Conference, reading MESSANGER, etc.—hold a more traditionally Brethren view of nonviolence than people who are not. I see these as going hand in hand.

Are there other factors that have contributed to this shift?

CB: Fewer and fewer of our pastors are trained at a Brethren seminary. Things like that have a ripple effect. . . . Fewer people receive training in a distinctly Brethren or Anabaptist understanding of Christian doctrine, so districts hire pastors who know absolutely nothing about the Brethren or Brethren ways of dealing with some of these issues. As a result, our congregations hear what the Baptist or Methodist congregation down the street would be hearing. We are saturated with an understanding of Christianity that could be heard on a radio show, or purchased in any Christian bookstore. Slap

st	305	201	69.9%
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ton	205	125	61.0%
ylvania	59	36	61.0%
	130	79	60.8%
	121	73	60.3%
	300	179	59.7%
	224	134	59.8%
	80	46	57.5%
	16	9	56.3%
	33	18	54.5%
it	32	16	50.0%



Brethren sociologist Carl Bowman presents findings from the Church Member Profile to the General Board.

lives. Even in areas such as a witness to Christ's way of peace, there are congregations scattered across the country that are doing interesting things and creative things . . . very much in the spirit of the Brethren historically. Such congregations offer lessons for the larger church. I can't deny that some of the general trends and patterns in the denomination are depressing to me, but survey results such as those from the Brethren Member Profile can challenge us to be faithful to Christ and to our denominational witness. It should never be simply a cause for lamentation. The future will be what we make it. **W**

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He conducted the interview with Carl Bowman in November.

another label on the church sign, and it could be Southern Baptist. This wasn't nearly so true during the first two-thirds of the 20th century. And certainly prior to that, the Brethren understood themselves as an alternate form of Christianity. . . . To what extent do Brethren really believe or live out "another way of living" today? To me, it's just not there in the data.

What does that say for our identity as Brethren?

CB: Interestingly, Brethren still really value their identity as Brethren. The question is, what does that mean? . . . Our identity today is so diffuse. Some of the historic positions that used to anchor it are now all a blur. So any time you get a large gathering of Brethren together, even though some congregations are still grounded in Christian themes of nonviolence, service, and simplicity, others see things differently—especially when it comes to practice. . . . Many Brethren have no memory that we were a peace church in the first place, so how can they begin to take a clear position or make a coherent witness to the broader world? Too many congregations have settled into a sort of cultural Christianity that equates Americanism with Christianity. It's not good for the church, and it makes it difficult. . . . Aid to people in need is probably the most commonly supported and well respected witness of the Brethren faith from all quarters of the denomination. Everyone can

unite behind the themes of disaster relief and service. Other areas of Christian action, however, highlight our differences.

So where do you see hope in these findings?

CB: There are always signs of hope. Our congregations are full of committed believers. All of them can speak to the ways that their faith is important in their

A GLIMPSE AT THE DATA

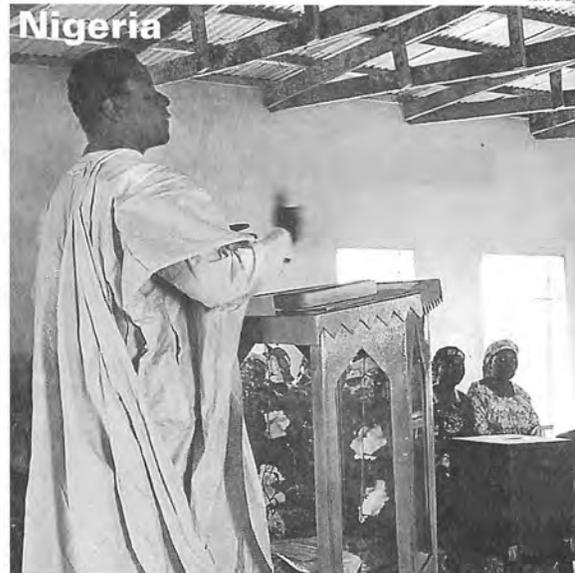
The Church Member Profile sample for the Church of the Brethren included 2,961 members in 127 congregations across all 23 districts. Some of the findings:

- Church of the Brethren membership is 60 percent female, and nearly two-thirds are age 50-plus.
- The typical congregation has about 90 members, with an average of 60 in Sunday worship.
- 40 percent of those surveyed have attended a Brethren summer camp; 17 percent have attended National Youth Conference.
- 45 percent of Brethren surveyed say Annual Conference decisions and rulings are unimportant to them; 42 percent say they are "fairly important."
- 78 percent of frequent Annual Conference attenders say "All war is sin"; 46 percent of non-attenders say so (about two-thirds of respondents had never attended an Annual Conference).
- 42 percent think of Jesus as a nonviolent peacemaker.
- 45 percent identify themselves as a religious conservative; 11 percent identify as religious liberals.
- 22 percent believe homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle.
- 47 percent of Brethren are strongly pro-life; 7 percent are strongly pro-choice.
- 75 percent oppose changing the denominational name to something that doesn't include the word "Brethren."
- 37 percent prefer only bread and cup communion over the full love feast.



Merv Keeney

India



Tom Craig

Nigeria

Jonathon Shive



Brazil

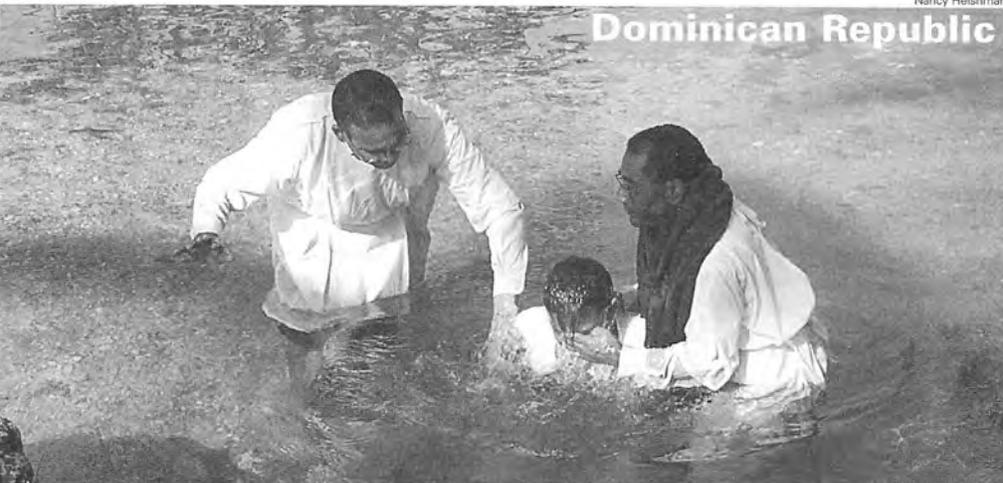
courtesy of Ludovic St. Fleur



Haiti

Brethren around the world Clockwise from top: feetwashing in India; preaching in Maiduguri, Nigeria; youth leadership in Rio Verde, Brazil; church planting in Haiti; and Baptism in The Dominican Republic.

Nancy Heishman



Dominican Republic

A global sense of being Brethren

by Mervin Keeney

Churches around the world are different, yet reflect common identity

New Testament accounts of the early church reflect differences in understanding and practice

that occurred as the faith was carried out from Jerusalem and other Christian centers into neighboring cultures. The Christian faith was understood and practiced somewhat differently in Jerusalem than in Rome, Corinth, or Philippi, which was evidenced in Paul's letters of encouragement and admonition.

Contemporary missiology encourages an approach that invites people into the gospel story and encourages them to respond to the call of Christ authentically, from within their own context. It can be asserted that the Christian message speaks to every culture, yet transcends culture—and often even confronts some parts of a culture. As a result of Christianity's universal character, one does not need to relinquish one's culture to become Christian. So, one does not need to choose between being either Arab *or* Christian, but the believer can be Arab *and* Christian, Chinese *and* Christian.

The term "planting" is an apt and highly descriptive word to convey how the gospel message takes root in new soil. Living things interact with their environment, and similarly the gospel message taking root in new soil is shaped by the character of that soil, sunshine, and the amounts and timing of rains. It is commonly observed that regional variations often exist between the thinking and practice of congregations in Pennsylvania and California, while both see themselves as a part of the Church of the Brethren. One might expect that there will likely be even larger cultural and theological variations between churches in the United States and, for example, churches in Brazil.

Anthropologists note that culture—the framework of commonly held values, beliefs, and norms within which a group understands reality—is invisible to those within it until one interacts with someone from another culture. It is in contact with "otherness" that the differing perspectives are revealed. Brethren from other cultures provide a dimension of "otherness" yet also are a part of "us," a global Church of the Brethren. Interacting with other parts of the global church creates an "us/not us" dynamic that is especially rich for the exploration of faith and identity.

But while churches planted in other soil will obviously be dif-

ferent in some ways from the US "mother church," a more important question arises: How will they be similar? Even though they may be "flavored" differently within another context, what foundations and characteristics in Christian belief and practice reflect common identity and heritage as members of a global Church of the Brethren?

New Christians often bring fresh insights and vitality to a congregation by their passion in new-found faith. Perhaps similarly, the actions and commitments of Brethren in other contexts offer the US church reaffirmations about living Brethren identity and values—and new insights about what it means to follow Jesus. US Brethren understandings of the gospel message that view the church as a community, see love of God and neighbor, and place an emphasis on peacemaking as outcomes of following Jesus are also evident among Brethren in other lands.

Brazil

Visitors to the church in Brazil speak in animated ways about the deep sense of community they feel among the people. Certainly there is a lot of hugging and greeting as people meet each other, but sharing food together and lively fellowship also surround the worship event. Marcos Inhauser, national director of the Brazil mission along with his wife, Suely, uses the phrase "theology of the table" to speak of this warm sense of connection and fellowship evident in the Brazilian churches.

That is in part because so often this fellowship is centered around a meal or snacks, but Inhauser would quickly add that all Christians, even those who have a lesser sense of community, also have a core dimension of this table theology because of the central practice of communion—the Table of the Lord. In Brazil, because life's daily realities—such as the loss of employment or marking a birthday—have been shared and often prayed over, the people's lives are intertwined with each other at a deeper level. The relatively small congregations invite and enable this spirit of personal connection.

These Brethren espouse a "lived theology," emphasizing the practice of faith in daily decisions and actions, and drawing on the study of scripture together to discern guidance for faithful



IN BRAZIL, ... THE PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE INTERTWINED WITH EACH OTHER AT A DEEPER LEVEL. THE RELATIVELY SMALL CONGREGATIONS INVITE AND ENABLE THIS SPIRIT OF PERSONAL CONNECTION.

living. Every congregation has some type of outreach to its community.

In the October 2004 *MESSENGER*, Brazil staff Greg and Karin Davidson Laszakovits quoted a member who voiced her personal experience with the emerging church in this way: "Igreja da Irmandade is different in everything. . . . the way that they teach, the way that they preach. When I came here I had no idea what the Bible was, and now I have a better idea. I had been going to church before, but was not being taught."

Dominican Republic

In many ways the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic reflects both the Pietist and Anabaptist values of its heritage. By its very composition, the Dominican church embodies a commitment to peacemaking and justice. With its almost equal balance between Dominicans and Haitian immigrants, the Dominican church models a radical alternative to the larger Dominican culture. The church values a unity in Christ that transcends nationality, race, and—in the DR—a violent history of antagonism, with the Spirit's power to bind people into one body.

Dominican Brethren strongly desire to maintain a good testimony in their communities by upholding a strict moral code. In this way they desire to be known "by the manner of their living." They try to model non-conformity to the world by striving to conform to a Christ-like lifestyle. Like the early Anabaptist community, they hold one another accountable in their congregations to maintain exemplary Christian morality.

These Brethren also display many qualities that illustrate their Pietist heritage. They hold worship often, with some congregations even maintaining an "every night of the week" schedule. Their Pietism is evidenced in a style of worship that is dynamic, expressive, heart-felt, and loud! Like the primitive church in Acts 2:42-27, they meet together almost daily, devoting themselves to Bible study, worship, and fellowship. Their fervor for evangelism is clearly seen in the home Bible studies, out-

door evangelistic services, street preaching, and friendship-based evangelism methods.

Their congregational ministries take on a holistic flavor with emphases on both evangelism and service. The balance is clearly tipped toward evangelism; however many congregations reach out to non-members in their communities with emergency help in times of crisis.

Haiti

This mission was prompted by, and is being led by, the Haitian-Americans of Atlantic Southeast District, who are also busily establishing Haitian congregations in that district. These efforts quickly gathered a congregation in the Delmas area of Port-au-Prince. Since coordinator Ludovic St. Fleur is a full-time pastor in Miami, progress relies on short preaching visits and Christian education training events when he can travel to Haiti. He is supported in this work by a Haiti Mission Advisory Committee, which is helping to explore the legal steps for a church to be recognized in Haiti, including purchase of land and a community outreach ministry.

While it may be too soon to assess the Brethren identity of this emerging body, St. Fleur would strongly assert that the intended outcome is a Haitian church that reflects Brethren identity. At the early planning stages, he and Global Mission Partnerships staff met with Dominican church leadership to envision and plan together. In these initial conversations, St. Fleur asserted that the goal is not to draw in existing congregations and pastors who already have another church identity, but "to grow a Church of the Brethren from the ground up."

In contrast to the passionate crusades that often are the basis of church formation in Haitian society, the Brethren approach thus far has focused on community worship and Bible teaching in the communities where Miami congregation members have family and friends. They recognize that this approach may be slower, and contrasts with common church growth practices in the Haitian context, but it can also be a relevant witness to the gospel that is consistent with New Testament accounts of the spread of the early church.

Nigeria

The Nigerian church, *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria* (EYN), is unique in its size and maturity. The partnership nature of our joint ministries places this relationship at a stage beyond being characterized



The annual summer vacation Bible school in the Dominican Republic served an estimated 3,000 children.

as church planting. In fact, EYN is now larger than the US Church of the Brethren.

EYN has rural roots, and most membership remains predominantly in the rural areas. Its members now include subsistence farmers as well as high-level government officials. It has national, district, and congregational structures, and an annual conference. Yet these characteristics that echo the US church only begin to touch the deeper identity of the Nigerian church.

EYN congregations practice the love feast and communion service with footwashing, Christian faith and church activities are a central reality in people's lives, and individuals are eager to share their faith. One can witness a generous spirit of hospitality to guests and in outreach to neighbors in need.

India

Renewed relationships with Brethren groups in India began in the past few years, and General Board staff have made several visits there, most recently in early December. These Brethren are primarily located in Gujarat State, on India's western coast.

Brethren in India have a highly relational, interpersonal style that fosters community. They take seriously the call of Christ conveyed through scripture to live with integrity, serve others, and express their faith forthrightly.

There is a growing sense of being a peace church, with a desire to minimize conflict and build connections. Power is shared through democratic structures, with members taking turns in leadership roles.



Growing pains and thanksgiving

The Church of the Brethren has felt called to share Christ in new places, and, by moving forward in faith, it has expanded its mission effort.

Stepping out in faith has resulted in "growing pains," as staff and funding must be found to enable each new effort to grow and blossom—to become what God intends for these new churches. Even so, these new international mission efforts have sparked enthusiasm and fresh momentum that we trust God will continue to bless and empower over time.

One can only voice thanksgiving for how God is working through the Church of the Brethren in mission to the world. Through these efforts, God's love is reaching people in many places, and their love and their sense of being Brethren is, in turn, reaching us. 

Mervin Keeney is executive director of Global Mission Partnerships for the Church of the Brethren General Board. Irvin and Nancy Heishman contributed to this article.

STARTING IN SUDAN

The General Board's new Sudan Initiative ministry is in the early stages of implementation. Establishing a team on the ground in post-war southern Sudan, where most infrastructure has been destroyed across broad geographic areas, is a major undertaking. The Church of the Brethren has not recently tried to implement a church planting effort in such an isolated context with such diminished local support systems.

The Sudan ministry was envisioned as a holistic humanitarian and peacemaking work in southern Sudan after decades of war have ended and peace agreements have brought hope for a period of greater stability. The need for healing and rebuilding communities led to the call for people to serve in agriculture, health care, reconciliation and peacemaking, or other areas of need while also addressing spiritual needs of sisters and brothers who had suffered decades of violence, destruction, and displacement. The Sudanese also invited the US church to start a Church of the Brethren there. So after Brethren have worked ecumenically in Sudan for nearly three decades during civil war and crisis, this new effort is expected to include church planting for the first time.

Bethany Theological Seminary is partnering with the General Board on some orientation components for the "lead team" that will begin the mission work, especially around Brethren understandings of Christian faith. The plan for this team also includes a representative of the Nigerian church, with the intent to link the US and Nigerian churches in mission and to incorporate Nigerian experience with church planting in an African context.

Jim and Pam Hardenbrook have been called as part of the lead team, and at least one other couple is expected to join them in the initial stage. They hope to be on the ground in Sudan by late summer.—Mervin Keeney



Matthew: by Rick Gardner *Good news for God's people*

'First Gospel' contains some good tools for teachers

How do we communicate the good news about Jesus? For the earliest followers of Jesus, the answer was by word of mouth. Stories were told and retold, sayings learned and repeated—sometimes grouped together by topic or catchword. This was the “gospel” that believers knew for a number of decades.

In time, however, this gospel took on a new form. One of the popular forms of literature in the Greco-Roman world was that of “lives” of notable persons. These short biographical accounts included lives of great philosophers, lives of the Caesars, even a life of Moses. It was thus probably inevitable that someone would decide to write a “life” of Jesus.

The first to do so was apparently the author of Mark's Gospel. Other “lives” soon followed, including the First Gospel or Gospel of Matthew. In fact, Matthew adopts Mark's storyline and expands it in various ways. (Though the actual author is unknown, we will follow convention and call him Matthew.)

A story with a plot

Like other stories or narratives, the lives of Jesus known as Gospels take shape

around a plot. The plot of Matthew's Gospel might be summarized as follows: In fulfillment of Scripture, God's Messiah, Jesus, inaugurated God's reign by his words and deeds of mercy, encountered strong opposition and gave his life to complete his mission, and gathered followers through whom he laid a new foundation for God's people.

Matthew's plot gets under way with Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit (1:18-25). This event signifies that Jesus is truly God-with-us, that God's reign is now a very real possibility. That reign becomes a matter of public proclamation when Jesus launches his mission and chooses his first disciples (4:17-25). This provides the occasion for the Sermon on the Mount, portraying Jesus as a notable teacher, and for the stories that follow depicting his mighty deeds.

With Jesus now in public view, the plot shifts to public reaction (11:2-6). Messengers from John the Baptist speak for everyone in the story when they come to Jesus and ask: “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Differing answers to that question soon become apparent in the episodes that follow, climaxing with Peter's confession at



The Last Supper. Illustration by Gustave Doré.

Caesarea Philippi: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (16:13-16).

Not everyone, however, shares the faith of the disciples. The ominous pattern that emerges is a growing divide between those who receive Jesus and those who reject him. We are not surprised then when Jesus, responding to Peter, declares his plan to rebuild Israel from the bottom up (16:17-20).

Hard on the heels of this announcement, Jesus makes a stunning prediction that turns the story toward Jerusalem (16:21-28). There suffering and death await him, and he must go through that ordeal and await God's deliverance. Eventually Jesus

AS MATTHEW WRITES, THEREFORE, HE PRESENTS THE STORY OF JESUS AS A NEW AND DECISIVE CHAPTER IN THE STORY OF ISRAEL. ISRAEL'S STORY FLOWS TOWARD JESUS, WHO NOW GUIDES THAT STORY TOWARD ITS GOAL. IT IS JESUS WHO DECLARES THE DEFINITIVE WORD ON DISCERNING GOD'S WILL, FULFILLING THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.



MATTHEW: A CLOSER LOOK

When written: During the final two decades of the first century C.E. Traditionally ascribed to the apostle Matthew, the Gospel may have been composed by a Christian-Jewish scribe (cf. 13:52), drawing on written and oral sources.

Famous stories: The visit of the magi, Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus' mighty deeds, parables of God's kingdom, Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman, Peter's confession of faith, the events of Jesus' passion.

Key verses: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill" (5:17); "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (16:18); "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

Other notes: Matthew is the first of the four Gospels that open the New Testament, the others being the Gospels according to Mark, Luke, and John. It has played a prominent role in the Anabaptist tradition, helping to shape our understanding of discipleship and the church.

enters Jerusalem (21:17), where the authorities plot his demise, his followers prove less than reliable, and the Roman governor orders his crucifixion.

God is also "plotting," however, and the plot takes its final twist when God raises Jesus from the dead, springing the good news on a group of unsuspecting women who come to visit his tomb (28:1-10). More than just a happy ending, this development makes it clear that Jesus' story has a future, one that begins with the disciples Jesus commissions to carry on and expand his mission (28:16-20).

A Gospel for teachers

As Matthew tells his story, he interweaves several long "speeches" by Jesus, five all together. Each speech collects sayings of Jesus on a particular topic, including ethics (5-7), mission (10), the kingdom (13), community (18), and the end-time (24-25). Together with

other teacher-friendly features (such as repetition and numerical patterns), these speeches prompt the question: Did Matthew perhaps write his Gospel for use by fellow teachers? The focus on teaching in the Great Commission (cf. 28:20) makes this thesis quite plausible.

A related question is the audience whom Matthew envisions on the receiving end of this teaching. The dominant view is that Matthew is writing for a house church or group of churches that he already knows. To put it another way, he envisions a local audience, an audience of believers who need further instruction in what it means to follow Jesus. Clearly, the First Gospel is well-designed to serve such a purpose. But are Matthew's horizons wholly local?

Bethany Theological Seminary teacher Dan Ulrich makes a strong case that Matthew has a wider audience in view. More specifically, Matthew anticipates that missionaries will use his Gospel to proclaim Jesus to new and receptive households throughout the Greek-speaking world. Evidence supporting this conclusion includes the emphasis on mission in the Gospel (cf. 9:35-10:42; 24:14; 26:13; 28:19-20) and the importance attached to receiving Jesus' messengers hospitably (cf. 10:40-42; 25:34-40).

Matthew's story and Israel's story

However wide the intended audience, the flavor of Matthew's Gospel is unmistakably Jewish, and contentiously so!

Matthew's life of Jesus bears witness to a conflict between rival Jewish groups, each seeking to shape the future of God's people in the aftermath of Rome's destruction of Jerusalem. For one group, the way forward lay in obedience to the Torah as defined by the heirs of the Pharisees. For the other group, the group to which Matthew belongs, the way forward lay in obedience to the teaching and practice of Jesus.

As Matthew writes, therefore, he presents the story of Jesus as a new and decisive chapter in the story of Israel. Israel's story flows toward Jesus, who now guides that story toward its goal. It is Jesus who declares the definitive word on discerning God's will, fulfilling the law and the prophets (5:17-48). It is Jesus who gives access to life in God's kingdom through the community he builds (16:18-19, cf. 23:13). And it is Jesus who is "with" his people to guide and empower them when they gather in his name (18:18-20) and carry out his mission (28:20).

This is the "gospel" of the Gospel according to Matthew!

Rick Gardner is emeritus professor of New Testament Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary. He lives in Huntley, Ill.

Messenger's "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in March: Mark, by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm.

Young Center conference examines Brethren identity

"Honoring a Legacy, Embracing a Future: 300 Years of Brethren Heritage," was the theme of an academic conference hosted by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College Oct. 11-13. The conference was attended by 106 participants and presenters, most from the Church of the Brethren but also including Brethren Church members and others from the Brethren movement.

Along with serious academic inquiry, participants heard strong calls for strengthening a particular Brethren identity—focused by some on peace witness—along with expressions of concern about the future of Brethren values and the future of the Church of the Brethren as a denomination.

Brethren face difficult challenges in maintaining identity and community, particularly in the media culture, Stewart Hoover said in the keynote address. Hoover, professor of media studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder and former staff member of the General Board, advised that Brethren must continue to search for a unique identity and voice. He spoke of the 21st century as a time of great change in institutions and religion where Christian identity is no longer denominational, but congregational.

Other plenary presentations focused on Anabaptist and Pietist heritage, the role of scripture in Brethren life, and the balance between inner and outer faith in Brethren tradition.

German scholar and Lutheran minister Marcus Meier offered new theories about Anabaptist and Pietist influences on the early Brethren. He has been a teaching assistant in the theology department at Philipps-University Marburg, and is the recipient of a research award from the University at Halle/Saale. His presentation contended that new research suggests a stronger Anabaptist influence on the radical Pietists of the early 18th century than has been recognized.

Brethren sociology professor Carl Bowman gave perhaps the most provocative paper (see article, p. 14), reporting results of a 2006 scientific survey of Church of the Brethren members. The opening phrase of the Church of the Brethren tagline—"Another way of living"—is "at best a hope, at worst a deception" in light of the survey, he said. He reviewed findings that indicate Brethren today are both conservative and progressive and many do not consider themselves to be radical, nor consider their faith to be radical or even Anabaptist or Pietist, and that relatively small

numbers of Brethren experience conflict between Brethren ways and the larger society. "Are these marks of another way of living, or the typical rural American way?" Bowman asked.

A panel of young adult scholars and seminary students rounded out the plenary sessions. Small-group sessions also were offered on more than 20 other topics organized around themes of theology, history, missions, contemporary issues, peace, hymnody, ministry, and service.

Richard T. Hughes gave closing reflections as a scholar from outside the Brethren tradition. A senior fellow in the Ernest L. Boyer Center and distinguished professor at Messiah College, he listed "lamentations" he heard at the conference, classifying them in three parts: the church in decline, lack of racial and ethnic diversity among Brethren, and lack of conflict resolution skills in congregations.

To the question, "How can the Brethren both survive and thrive in the 21st century?" Hughes focused on a main answer he heard at the conference: Brethren need to find ways to inject their voice into the public square. "Your voice in my judgment is far too muted," he said. At a time when global conflict threatens the very existence of the world, peace churches have an obligation to speak up, he said. "Humility does not mean you have no voice."

Bethany Theological Seminary offered streaming video of the conference, available at <http://webcast.bethanyseminary.edu>. Photos are at www.brethren.org/pjournal/2007/300thAnnivAcademic.



The 300th anniversary academic conference hosted by the Young Center offered an opportunity for Brethren from a variety of backgrounds to examine current issues for the Brethren movement.

Regina Roberts



Keynote speaker Stewart Hoover, left, chats with Dale Brown, professor emeritus at Bethany Theological Seminary, at the 300th anniversary academic conference.

NCC assembly reviews 'social creed,' elects Noffsinger to Governing Board

Church of the Brethren representatives attended the annual General Assembly of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and Church World Service Nov. 6-8 in Iselin, N.J. Using the theme "Journeys: For We Walk by Faith..." (2 Cor. 5:7), time was spent in worship, Bible study, and fellowship, as well as business.

The assembly installed new officers and a new general secretary, set in motion plans for a new quadrennium, passed resolutions on social issues, and received the text of "A Social Creed for the 21st Century." During elections, Stanley Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, was chosen to serve on the NCC Governing Board as vice president at large.

The "Social Creed" had been approved by the Governing Board in September. In 1908 the NCC's predecessor, the Federal Council of Churches, adopted a social creed that addressed issues of the early 20th century such as industrialization, and pledged then "to work together for a better, fairer and more faithful United States."

The NCC has now developed a social creed for the 21st century that addresses globalization, poverty, and violence. "We—individual Christians and churches—commit ourselves to a culture of peace and freedom that embraces nonviolence, nurtures

character, treasures the environment, and builds community, rooted in a spirituality of inner growth and outward action," the conclusion of the new social creed states. The full text is at www.nccusa.org/news/ga2007.socialcreed.html.

In other business, the assembly reaffirmed the NCC's commitment to Middle East peace, unanimously passing a statement updating a 1980 Middle East policy. The updated statement calls for "responsible public discourse" about Middle East issues, expresses concern for the drop in the number of Middle East Christians, and calls for interfaith sensitivities "devoid of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia."

The assembly also urged the US House of Representatives to pass legislation recognizing the slaughter of Armenians in 1915 as a genocide, continued to evaluate recovery efforts in the Gulf coast following Hurricane Katrina, and established a memorial fund honoring Claire Randall, the NCC's first woman general secretary.

Vicken Aykazian, archbishop of the Diocese of the Armenian Orthodox Church of America (Eastern), was installed as president of the NCC; Peg Chamberlin, a Moravian clergywoman and executive director of the Minnesota Council of Churches, was installed as presi-

dent elect; and Michael Kinnamon, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) clergyman, educator, and ecumenical leader, was elected and installed as the NCC's ninth general secretary.

Brethren participants included elected representatives Nelda Rhoades Clark, Jennie Ramirez, and Marianne Miller Speicher; and General Board staff including Noffsinger, Global Mission Partnerships executive director Merv Keeney, Brethren Witness/Washington Office director Phil Jones, and director of Identity and Relations Becky Ullom. Also participating in the meeting as an NCC staff member was Church of the Brethren member Jordan Blevins. Noffsinger had an opportunity to speak about the denomination's 300th anniversary and the *Fresh from the Word* anniversary devotional book published by Brethren Press on the floor of the assembly. He presented a copy to outgoing NCC president Michael Livingston.

As 2008 signifies a new quadrennium for the NCC, each communion identified delegates to serve for the next four years. Church of the Brethren representatives will be Elizabeth Bidgood Enders, Ken Reiman, John (J.D.) Glick, Merv Keeney, Illana Naylor, and Stan Noffsinger. David Metzler and Wendy McFadden will serve on the NCC's Interfaith Relations Commission from 2008 to 2011.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 3 Service Sunday

Feb. 28-March 2 Brethren Academy new student orientation, Richmond, Ind.

March 2 Brethren Press spring curriculum quarter begins

March 7-9 Association of Brethren Caregivers board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

March 8-10 General Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

March 9 One Great Hour of Sharing

March 17-21 Brethren Volunteer Service spring retreat, Newark, Ill.

March 27-30 Fellowship of Brethren Homes Annual Forum and Association of Brethren Caregivers Health Ministries Assembly, St. Louis, Mo.

March 28-30 Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees meeting, Richmond, Ind.

March 29-April 3 Christian Citizenship Seminar, New York and Washington, D.C.

April 4-6 Mission Alive 2008, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren; Roundtable Regional Youth Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) College; Regional Youth Conference at McPherson (Kan.) College

NORTH KOREA



Famine-stricken North Korea has been a regular recipient of grants from the Church of the Brethren General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund.

Grants totaling \$60,000 for flood response and rural development in North Korea have been approved by two funds of the Church of the Brethren General Board: the Global Food Crisis Fund and the Emergency Disaster Fund. The action was prompted by setbacks suffered by North Korean agriculture following torrential rains last summer.

Giving impetus to the response was a \$20,000 gift to the Global Food Crisis Fund from Grace Christian Church, a Church of the Brethren congregation in Hatfield, Pa., and the Korean Presbyterian Church in America. Focused on flood recovery, the effort was initiated by Young Son Min, pastor of Grace Christian Church.

The grants are "a step in the Church of the Brethren's effort to witness to the compassion and love of Jesus for all peoples, especially to the impoverished and the estranged," Global Food Crisis Fund manager Howard Royer said. "This gift is a song of partnership . . . across agencies, between the Church of the Brethren and the Korean Presbyterian Church in America, among haves and have-nots. Praise God!"

Four farm communities in North Korea that have received assistance from the Global Food Crisis Fund for a decade were devastated by flooding in August 2007. Drastic damage occurred to crops of cotton, rice, corn, and vegetables. Some communities also suffered the loss of roads, bridges, and construction materials. The grants will be used not only for emergency food and flood recovery but also for sustainable agricultural development in the form of vinyl greenhouses that will extend the growing season into the winter months.

Agglobe, a long-time Global Food Crisis Fund partner, will facilitate the recovery and development programs, enlisting further support from development and assistance agencies in South Korea.

Other recent grants from the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund

- \$30,000 to the Church of the Brethren Community Development Program in the Dominican Republic
- \$15,000 to Norwegian Church Aid for a hospital in Iraq
- \$15,000 to Church World Service and Action by Churches Together for wells in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Vital Pastors groups report at San Antonio conference

One group looked at postmodernism, another at being missional. Still another examined the balance of worshipping with both head and heart.

In all, six groups of pastors studied a variety of questions over the past two years but all with the same ultimate goal: contributing to their pastoral excellence and sustaining them in ministry. They reported their findings during a Vital Pastors conference held Nov. 5-9 at the Oblate Renewal Center in San Antonio, Texas.

The conference continued the work of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. Dozens of institutions around the country, including the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, received generous grants to make the endeavor possible.

"Lilly asked where can they best invest resources to build up the church, and they settled on pastors," said Brethren Academy director Jonathan Shively, who led the effort to get one of the grants.

The first four Brethren "cohort" groups reported last February. A new class of six cohorts began their study in January 2007; another class began last month. The final scheduled class of cohorts will begin in January 2009. Three more concluding retreats are planned in fall 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Each cohort group examines a "critical question" related to pastoral ministry, beginning with an immersion experience to study the issue in context. Groups that reported in San Antonio had traveled to the Iona community in Scotland, South Africa, Rome, Texas, Hawaii, and a pastors' conference in San Diego.

Many of the questions centered on transformation, both personal and congregational, and on the changing culture in which the church finds itself. As one participant said, "I'm still trying to figure out what it means to be a pastor in this emerging world . . . and it's actually a lot of fun." Another noted, "Fewer people are identifying themselves as Christians. . . . We can't just assume there's respect for Christians and Christianity." That, he said, has parallels to the pre-Constantine early church.

Most of the cohort groups are geographical, drawing four to six pastors from a particular district or region. One group, though, consisted of four clergy couples



Pastors Paul Roth, left, of Broadway, Va., and Louie Rieman of Indianapolis discuss a question presented during a Southern Ohio cohort group's report.

who are either serving together in team ministry or each serving separate congregations. Another grouped pastors who are serving churches in college or university settings.

In addition to the group reporting, in blocks of three hours each, the conference also included daily times of wor-

ship. Glenn Timmons, co-director of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program for the Brethren Academy with his wife, Linda, set the tone in the opening service with the reminder, "The reign of God shows up where we least expect it. We want to control outcomes rather than be surprised by grace."

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'Amish Grace': Lessons in Christian forgiveness

One of the best examples of a bait-and-switch in a holy cause is the Menno Hof museum in Shippshewana, a small town in northern Indiana awash with Amish. The Menno Hof lures folks in to learn about the Amish, and they do, but along the way they learn the history of Anabaptism, a different way of looking at the Scriptures, the modern Mennonite Church, and, ultimately, how to find a local congregation.



FRANK RAMIREZ

Amish Grace, by Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, also draws upon the same endless fascination the public has for horse-drawn buggies, shoo-fly pie, and plain black bonnets. Within these pages readers unfamiliar with another way of living will indeed relive the horrifying day of Oct. 2, 2006 (referred to by the Amish as their own 9/11), when five Amish girls were senselessly murdered in their one-room schoolhouse near Nickel Mines, Pa.

They'll also learn more about the now-familiar story of the astounding forgiveness practiced by the victims' families and the Amish community at large. But without noticing, these readers will learn far more. They will discover—painlessly—what it truly means to take the Sermon on the Mount seriously. They will be challenged, without knowing it, to reflect on what

THE BAIT IS THE AMISH. BUT THE REAL PRODUCT IS JESUS CHRIST—WHICH IS WHAT THE AMISH (AND WE BRETHREN) WOULD PREFER.

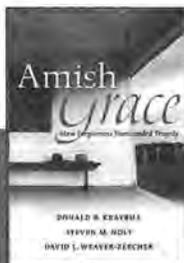
it might truly mean to "practice what others only preach."

Like I said, bait and switch. The bait is the Amish. But the real product is Jesus Christ—which is what the Amish (and we Brethren) would prefer.

One of the most striking aspects of the Nickel Mines murders was the way the victims' families and the Amish at large immediately visited the family of the murderer and extended forgiveness and grace. They also shared a portion of the financial contributions that came streaming in from around the world. Some outsiders criticized the Amish for somehow cheapening the process of forgiveness. The authors explain, however, the Amish interpretation of the clause in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Many Christians say that we forgive because God forgave us. The Amish say that God cannot forgive us if we do not forgive others.

The Amish grow up with stories from the



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. **Authors:** Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher. **Publisher:** San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons (2007). **Pages:** 237 (hardback). **Cost:** \$24.95 (list price). **To order:** Brethren Press, 800-441-3712 or www.brethrenpress.com.

Martyr's Mirror that make forgiveness automatic. However Amish differentiate between forgiveness, which is unconditional, and pardon, meaning one must still suffer the consequences of sin. As for reconciliation, it "requires a renewal of trust, and sometimes that is not possible." Even so, it is clear that unlike American society at large, which places a high value on retribution and revenge (sometimes invoking Christian images and God's blessing on the process), Amish society sees things radically differently.

The Amish function like a Rorschach test to most Americans. We see what we want to see. Some see the Amish as quaint Currier and Ives cutouts of a long-gone era that never existed. To others they embody a safe version of the simple life. Cynics see them as hypocrites. Few, however, recognize that the Amish are a committed community of believers who might filter their choices about dress, technology, and lifestyle through the lens of their understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The book provides a primer of Amish and Anabaptist history, and explain the way that Amish communities (emphasis on the plural, for this is not a monolithic movement) function.

The authors are especially qualified to write this book. If you stop at any Amish-related tourist site (such as the Menno Hof, for instance, which I highly recommend) or even a bookstore at a highway rest stop in Pennsylvania, you're likely to come upon any number of titles these writers have produced for both the popular and academic presses regarding the Amish culture.

They were the ones who were interviewed endlessly by the popular media when the tragedy occurred.

You will not find an idealized portrait of Amish life in these pages. Theirs is not a perfect community, and it is clear that for many the difficulty of having to forgive means forgiving the murderer daily. The authors wrestle with the difficult

questions of Amish life, the limitations these impose, and the uncomfortable consequence of attempting to attribute the murders in part, at least, to God's will.

As we Brethren struggle with statistics that suggest we have bought into the popular culture and have been abandoning our core values, the authors issue this challenge: "We are not only the products of our culture, we are also producers of our culture. We need to construct cultures that value and nurture forgiveness." To this end a study guide is available at www.amish-grace.com for those who wish to use the book as an elective.

One small caveat—our circle of faith is small enough that it is almost inevitable that any Brethren reviewer will know at least one of the authors, and that is so in this case. And one final point—all author royalties go to Mennonite Central Committee for their ministries to children. ❧

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

ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (*Bridgewater, Va.*)

Bridgewater on Dec. 20 hosted a 60th birthday party for American television icon Howdy Doody. The event was held in conjunction with the exhibit "Remembering An American Icon: Howdy Doody, 1947-2007," which featured memorabilia collected by Ralph MacPhail Jr., professor of theater emeritus. *Howdy Doody* aired on NBC from 1947 to 1960.

Elizabethtown College (*Elizabethtown, Pa.*)

Elizabethtown senior middle hitter Kelly Downs of Red Lion, Pa., was named the 2007 *ESPN The Magazine* College Division Academic All-American of the Year in volleyball, as voted on by members of the College Sports Information Directors of America. Downs is the first Elizabethtown student-athlete to earn the prestigious honor, which goes to the highest vote-getter among candidates for the Academic All-America team.

Juniata College (*Huntingdon, Pa.*)

Taking a "money where your mouth is" approach to convincing families that a private education is affordable, Juniata is guaranteeing incoming freshmen a bachelor's degree in four years or the fifth year is free. Administrators at Juniata, seeking to illustrate that huge state universities are ultimately more expensive than private schools, believe the move is unprecedented.

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

The university and the city of La Verne joined on Dec. 1 for "The Great Clean Air Tree Planting Project." Along with receiving 18 trees to be planted on the main campus, the university provided volunteers to assist in the planting of 75 trees throughout the city. "It's a good green thing," said David Koch, the university's director of facilities management.

Manchester College (*North Manchester, Ind.*)

Manchester's Symphonic Band performed a "Crossing Borders" concert in November as a fundraiser for a January service trip to Puerto Rico. On the trip, the 34-student band scheduled a series of performances in hospitals and churches. Band members also planned to deliver food to underserved areas and maybe even do some construction.

McPherson College (*McPherson, Kan.*)

McPherson, known for its auto restoration program, had a 1956 Ford Thunderbird convertible spotlighted during prime-time coverage at the prestigious annual Barrett-Jackson auction held in Scottsdale, Ariz., Jan. 18. The car was donated by McPherson president Ron Hovis and his wife, Robin. Its restoration was completed in 2005; it sports a red porthole hardtop and white soft-top.

Manheim youth's project is music to ears of COBYS

A teen provided the vision. A blind musician provided the music. The result: nearly \$13,000 raised to support a Christian ministry..

About 450 people attended a Ken Medema benefit concert held Oct. 21 in Manheim, Pa., to benefit COBYS Family Services. COBYS is a family agency affiliated with the Church of the Brethren's Atlantic Northeast District that offers adoption and foster care services, counseling, family life education, and a home for teen mothers.

The vision for a benefit concert grew out of high school senior Rebekah Roland's trip to the 2006 Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference in Fort Collins, Colo. Bekah, a member of East Fairview Church of the Brethren near Manheim, was enthralled by Medema's music, which was featured in several NYC worship services.

About the same time, she was contemplating how to meet the senior graduation project requirement at her high school. The idea of staging a Ken Medema benefit concert was born, and COBYS was chosen as the beneficiary.

"I knew I wanted it to benefit something close to home," Bekah says. COBYS has been very close to the Roland home since 2001, when Bekah's parents, Jimm and Beth Roland, adopted younger brother Jeremy—now 7—through COBYS.

Armed with a vision and a personal connection, Bekah crafted an appeal letter and began asking friends, family members, and others to help bring her vision to fruition. About a hundred donors responded by giving more than \$11,000 to stage the concert, easily exceeding the amount needed to cover expenses and everyone's expectations—including her own!

Support came in waves from East Fairview, where Jimm is senior pastor; then Ephrata Church of the Brethren, where Beth grew up and Beth's parents still attend; and then Chambersburg, where Jimm formerly pastored. Many friends and business owners from the Manheim area and beyond also contributed. Additional income came from ticket sales and donations given at the concert.

The two-hour concert turned out to be a joyous celebration. The evening event featured standard Medema fare, including upbeat songs with dazzling keyboard accompaniment and a healthy dose of improvisation. Medema performed personalized songs about COBYS ministries and about Bekah's role in bringing people together for a concert.

Results of the event included profits of almost \$13,000 to serve children and families, lots of good feelings, and one high school girl taking a major step toward graduation.—**Don Fitzkee**

Don Fitzkee is development and interpretation coordinator for COBYS Family Services in Leola, Pa. He is a member of Chiques Church of the Brethren in Manheim.



Glenn Riegele

COBYS staff member Don Fitzkee thanks Bekah Roland at the benefit concert, on stage with performer Ken Medema (left).

The Legacy and Character of Deacons

Whenever there are expressed human needs, deacons respond...

In this 300th anniversary celebration year, we commemorate the legacy and character of deacons within our denomination as we enter another century of opportunities to serve and to care.



Deacon Ministry Training Events

The Association of Brethren Caregivers invites you to attend a deacon ministry training event this spring featuring:

- Bible study
- Keynote presentations
- Multiple workshops about deacon roles and functions, recruitment of new deacons, outreach to all, and love feast
- Worship

Cost for the one-day training event is \$20 per person. Lunch will be provided. Register at www.brethren-caregivers.org.

April 12

Dallas Center (Iowa) Church of the Brethren
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (co-sponsored by Spurgeon Manor)

April 19

Modesto (California) Church of the Brethren
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

May 10

Lacey (Washington) Community Church of the Brethren
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

May 11

Wenatchee (Washington) Brethren-Baptist Church
1 p.m. – 6 p.m.

May 31

Frederick (Maryland) Church of the Brethren
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.



For information about our ministries, call the Association of Brethren Caregivers at (800) 323-8039 or visit www.brethren-caregivers.org.

Being Family Growing in God's Love



"...being rooted and established in love...filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:17, 19 NIV

Health Promotion Sunday • May 18, 2008

As family, bound together in love, we are called to seek ways to accompany each other as we face the realities of what it means to live as family in today's world. Love is the foundation upon which to grow a healthy family that can meet life's challenges with resiliency and hope. We are family, God's family, growing together in God's love.

We invite individuals, families and congregations to explore how families and our faith communities can grow—clothed in God's love—in harmony, compassion, kindness, humility, and quiet strength.

Many resources for individuals, families and congregations will be available March 1 at www.brethren-caregivers.org:

- Worship resources
- Dramas and children's stories
- Family and intergenerational activities
- Ways to commemorate family events and passages
- Meditations and small group studies
- Suggested books, movies and other resources related to strengthening families

How do we see the world?

The October 2007 MESSENGER, on three pages of its cover, featured Disaster Relief, the Emergency Disaster Fund and the Global Food Crisis Fund. These are indeed great ministries of the Church of the Brethren, and our major Brethren channels to serve human need in the world.

But looking at the world through lenses calibrated to see emergency, disaster, and crisis may distort and discolor the world we see. Crisis and disaster are hardly more frequent in foreign countries than in the US. In looking for unusual occasions of suffering we too easily miss seeing the obvious, greater, and ongoing suffering of hundreds of millions more. An estimated 3 billion, almost half the world, live on less than \$2.50 a day. One in five lives on less than \$500 a year—a mere \$1.40 a day.

Day in and day out, the world's poorest face overwhelming odds. They struggle for more than daily bread. I deeply resist calling what they face a "global food crisis." It is a total and unending crisis of living. Yet, as I read reports and numbers, Brethren do relatively little for these poorest of the poor.

Across more than a decade, I had the repeated opportunity to go into many communities of such poor in a dozen countries of Asia and the Pacific. I also learned to know their hopes in letters from community leaders with plans to better their lives. The poor are not looking for a hand out but some justice and a hand up.

Pertinent to these issues, the October MESSENGER shared the story of the Huntington (Ind.) Church and its 10-year relationship with a sister church in Tisma, Nicaragua. They noted that the Nicaraguans "just want us to know how it is down there." That relationship led to working together on libraries, a preschool, improving farming skills, planting trees, and more efficient stoves for the Nicaraguans. Not stated, but equally important, is the better understanding that Brethren in Huntington now have for the life issues faced by their sisters and brothers in Tisma.

I covet that kind of understanding, that kind of relationship, for more Brethren. I am deeply convinced that for Brethren our commitments to peace, service, and simple living cannot be separated, and that we dare not lose touch with God's children in need, no

matter where they are. Working with them can restore a measure of economic and social justice, basic foundations for peace. And if we more fully understand the issues faced by the poor, this can be a life-altering encounter that opens us to new relationships and a broader and deeper faith.

I believe Brethren would benefit from reassessing our high level of commitment to disaster, emergency, and crisis. Do these words really sum up a God-inspired perspective on the world? How about a more positive view of the world that lets it be known we have heard the Good News? Why not new programs and new titles that reflect the hope with which peacemakers and servants face greed, hate, and scarcity, and hold out the implausible alternative vision of shar-

ing, peace, and sufficiency? Ultimately, changing what we call our job may indeed have the power to change us.

Ellis J. Shenk
Bel Air, Md.

What about the environment?

I must admit that I was perplexed and deeply disappointed over your choice to feature a race car driver in your cover story for the November 2007 issue. Even though certain aspects of Brethren heritage were highlighted—family, community, church attendance and support—the enormous carbon footprint and environmental degradation of motor sports were never mentioned.

The 1991 Annual Conference Statement "Creation: Called to Love" reminds us

Pontius' Puddle



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Consider visiting four Brethren heritage centers in Virginia before or following Annual Conference July 12-16:

Bridgewater Retirement Community, Bridgewater
(540) 828-2550 or (800) 491-9129

CrossRoads Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, Harrisonburg
(540) 438-1275

John Kline Homestead, Linville Creek Church, Broadway
(540) 896-5001

Reuel B. Pritchett Museum and Alexander Mack Library at Bridgewater College. (540) 828-5462

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that Brethren heritage also includes the call to "pursue a lifestyle that is wise and responsible" in using the earth's resources. Perhaps we Brethren need to be reminded of St. Augustine's observation, "Consistency: Thou art a virtue."

George F. Pickens
Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Series has been enlightening

I just wanted to express my thanks to those who have been contributed to the minor prophet series ("Journey through the Word") over the past months. They certainly helped me to get a better understanding of who they were and their contribution to the sacred scriptures.

Perhaps a series like these could be done on the letters from Paul to the many churches.

Lee Albert
San Diego, Calif.

Editor's note: This Bible study series is progressing sequentially through the books of the Bible, so we begin the New Testament this month. Paul's letters will be featured beginning this summer.

TRAVEL WITH TOURMAGINATION TO EXPLORE THE WORLD

2008 TOURS

SPRINGTIME CRUISE FROM AMSTERDAM TO PARIS
(March 22-April 2)

EXPERIENCE SOUTH AMERICA (March 28-April 11)

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MOSCOW AND SIBERIA (May 24-June 4)

ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH AMBS (May 25-June 4)

MENNONITE GREAT TREK ALONG THE SILK ROAD
(May 25-June 9)

ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 4-16)

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES (June 25-July 7)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 7-20)

EXPLORING SWISS-GERMAN FAMILY ROOTS IN EUROPE (August 25-September 7)

MENNONITE STORY IN POLAND WITH PETER KLASSEN
(September 16-24)

CHINA AND A YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (October 8-21)

TM ALUMNI MYSTERY TOUR (October 15-23)

FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MOSES (November 2-14)

2009 TOURS

CHURCHES AND SAFARIS IN KENYA AND TANZANIA
(February 9-20)

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CLASSIFIEDADS

Mediterranean Cruise 14 days beginning Nov. 14, 2008, Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey. Visit: Athens, Rome, Naples, Pompeii, Malta, Sicily, and Corinth plus Delphi/Metcora Post-Tour! Hosted by CoB Rev. John and Rev. Linda Stoner with over twenty years experience as professional travel agents. Prices start at under \$3,800 including airfare, airport transportation, all port charges, on-board tips and taxes. Call 877-456-8769 or www.smallgrouptours.com and link to e-mail.

Need Property Insurance? Mutual Aid Association (MAA) has been providing reasonable-cost coverage for homes, farms, renters' 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.

Five-Bedroom Home for Sale in Florida. This lovely home is located in Cape Coral, Florida, near Christ the Servant Church of the Brethren with 5 bedrooms, 3 baths, a 3-car garage, and a pool. It is being sold to help John and Mary Mueller continue in their long-term leadership role with Brethren Disaster Ministries. They are only asking for the tax appraisal price of \$307,880. Call John or Mary at (239) 823-5240 for more information.

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

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

New Members

Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Brian Flory, Kimberly Koczan-Flory

Briery Branch, Dayton, Va.: Brynn Kiser, Brandon Riddleberger, Jason Riddleberger, Dakota May, Bradley Wilfong, Leonard Sauder, Rhoda Sauder, Linda Long, Quinton Long, Charlene Long, Sheila Miller, Jamie Proefrock

Carlisle, Pa.: Anna Bixler, Elwood Thumma, Sara Thumma

County Line, Champion, Pa.: Lisa Geary, Steven Geary

Creekside, Elkhart, Ind.: Tom Lamb, Betty Lamb, Roger Stutsman, Larry Ludlow

Curryville, Pa.: Al Bochtel, Amy Bochtel, Nick Bochtel, Emily Bochtel, Jeff Shoenfelt

Elizabethtown, Pa.: Josh Tindall, Matt Bixler, Laura Bixler, Linda Riddle, Denise Uhl

Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio: Molly Bowman

Fairview, Mount Clinton: Harrisonburg, Va.: Jerry Fink, Carolyn Fink, Edward Dodds, Phyllis Dodds, Justin Myers

Glendale, Calif.: George Haley, Terry Haley, Shelly Haley, Linda Montray

Greencastle, Pa.: Emma Kendle, Sage Kendle, Savannah Stahl, Desirae Shaffer, Seth Heckman, Amanda Koons, Larry Young, Cheryl Young, Michael Barnhart, Patty Barnhart, Nancy Baker, Kim Lewis, Lori Swain, Tina Hull

Harman, W.Va.: Trevor Marcum, Megan Marcum

Harmony, Myersville, Md.: Justin Burrier, Jason Burrier

Harrisburg, Pa.: James Perdue, Julie Perdue, Roger Dixon, Patricia Dixon

Kokomo, Ind.: Gretchen Catron, Kaylia Ferguson

Lititz, Pa.: Dick Miller, Shirley Miller, Bill Saylor, Linda Saylor, Betty Krull, Carl Witwer, Jeanne Witwer

Montezuma, Dayton, Va.: Diamond Hockett

Osage, McCune, Kan.: Tyler Egbert, Debra McMaster, Evelyn Platt

Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.:

Ariel Clark, Betty Hostetler
Piqua, Ohio: Rebecca Elliott
Pleasant Hill, Ohio: Sam Dewey, Dawn Dewey, John Huffaker, Sue Huffaker, Shanna Reesby, Naida Coate Miles, James Guenther, Carolyn Guenther

Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va.: Stanley Persinger, Judy Persinger, Elizabeth Jane Shelton

Roxbury, Johnstown, Pa.: Brian N. Simmons, Briana Simmons, Mildred Simmons, Susan Simmons

Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Scott W. Smith, Susan Smith, Sean Smith

Smith River, Woolwine, Va.: Thurman Hall

Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.: Donald Dibert, Doris Dibert, Aimee Arehart, Joe Payne, Kim Payne, Wesley Waltower

Spring Run, McVeytown, Pa.: Elma Sigler, Cody Dunmire, Ryan Wilson, Tyler Dietz, Chelsea Bilger

Stover Memorial, Des Moines, Iowa: Harley Wise

Uniontown, Pa.: Kayla Means, Justin Gottheld, Haley Wable, Danielle Hanan, Paul DeFazio, Tiffany Ellsworth

White Cottage, Ohio: Jeff Armbrust, Katlyn Maxwell, Jason Maxwell, Karen Wright

York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Gabriela Weaver

Wedding Anniversaries

Bane, William and Velma, Burlington, W.Va., 60

Bard, Bennett R. and Doris, Chambersburg, Pa., 50

Blattenberger, Donald and Louise, Mercersburg, Pa., 55

Brandon, Louis and Jeanne, Goshen, Ind., 60

Cook, Harold and Henrietta, Brookville, Ohio, 55

Demuth, William and Doris, Chambersburg, Pa., 60

Dobbins, Carl and Mae, Floyd, Va., 70

Fogelsanger, Donald and Marjorie, Chambersburg, Pa., 50

George, Dale and Verna, Carlisle, Pa., 60

Hatcher, Wallace and Carolyn, Broadway, Va., 50

Heisey, Paul and Dorothy, Schaefferstown, Pa., 60

Keller, John and Ruth, Lititz, Pa., 70

Landis, Menno and Virginia, Chambersburg, Pa., 60

Peters, Darryl and Helen, New Lebanon, Ohio, 50

Rousselow, LeRoy and Maxine, Waterloo, Iowa, 65

Sherck, Arthur and Marjorie, Goshen, Ind., 70

Snell, Galen and Ruth, Yuma, Ariz., 55

Welling, Dwaine and Fran, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 50

Wengert, Nelson and Jean, Chambersburg, Pa., 50

Worthington, Ellis and Edna, Newville, Pa., 50

Deaths

Andrews, Clara M., 91, McVeytown, Pa., Sept. 10

Berkebile, Rozann, 63, Kingman, Ariz., May 30

Burns, Lucille, 92, Lafayette, Ind., Oct. 30

Chapman, Jack, 77, Elizabethtown, Pa., Dec. 2, 2006

Coleman, Irma Grace, 75, Telford, Pa., Oct. 14

Davidson, Opel Noel, 96, McCune, Kan., Nov. 5

Diener, Ray, 65, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 2

Dohner, Miriam, 97, Greenville, Ohio, Aug. 20

Douglas, Galen, 50, Lawrence, Kan., Oct. 29

Estep, John R., 73, Woodstock, Va., Oct. 30

Felix, Mary Jane, 80, New Paris, Pa., Nov. 25

Fisher, Linda, 66, McVeytown, Pa., May 17

Fuge, Anna L., 93, Johnstown, Pa., Oct. 20

Good, Alice, 89, Elizabethtown, Pa., June 28

Gordon, Don, 78, Elkhart, Ind., Nov. 14

Gray, Herman, 82, Troutville, Va., Nov. 15

Haan, Vicki, 50, Kalamazoo, Mich., Dec. 7

Harbaugh, Dorothy, 81, Waterloo, Iowa, Nov. 17

Heisey, Lowell V., 88, Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 7

Hildebrand, Brian, 69, Denton, Md., Nov. 25

Hinich, Richard, 80, Curryville, Pa., Oct. 2

Holsinger, J. Garwood, 90, Lewistown, Pa., May 19

Keifer, Evelyn, 86, Piqua, Ohio, Nov. 19

Kimpston, Martha, 88, Waterloo, Iowa, Dec. 5

Kissel, Dale, 88, Huntingdon, Pa., Jan. 23, 2007

Kump, Marcia L., 58, Hanover, Pa., Nov. 19

Lewis, James, 78, State Line, Miss., Nov. 24

Long, Kathryn, 87, Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 25

Martin, Francis, 79, Freeport, Ill., Nov. 14

Martin, Grace M., 96, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 1

Masemore, Edith, 94, McVeytown, Pa., April 24

Meeck, Warren W., 88, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Oct. 25

Messamer, Homer, 89, Modesto, Calif., Nov. 22

Milbank, Michelle, 46, Fulks Run, Va., Oct. 5

Mishler, John D., 91, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 18

Mohler, Pearl, 92, Shippenburg, Pa., Nov. 13

Painter, Grace, 86, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 26, 2007

Parrish, Cecil, 72, Modesto, Calif., Oct. 25

Petcher, Mary Beth, 61, Lombard, Ill., Sept. 19

Porter, Betty, 74, Rockwood, Pa., Oct. 6

Pushkar, Harold, 80, Melcroft, Pa., Dec. 9

Riebling, Delmar E., 82, Glenville, Pa., Nov. 23

Riggs, Lois McCole, 84, Girard, Kan., Nov. 5

Roberts, Sylvia, 74, Lititz, Pa., Nov. 22

Rossini, Victor, 65, Uniontown, Pa., Nov. 8

Rothrock, Calvin, 75, McVeytown, Pa., June 14

Russell, Maxine J., 83, Springboro, Ohio, Oct. 24

Shaffer, Julia, 82, Johnstown, Pa., Sept. 5

Shoemaker, Dorothy, 93, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 26

Shuler, Mary, 78, Lancaster, Pa., April 19

Shuman, Anna, 89, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 23

Shuman, Luella, 85, Carlisle, Pa., Oct. 28

Sloan, Gilbert, 78, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Nov. 28

Spang, Clifford, 68, Lebanon, Pa., Oct. 12

Stambaugh, Ethel C., 79, Westminster, Md., Nov. 24

Stauffer, Lloyd B., 84, York, Pa., Aug. 26

Trimmer, Mervin, 98, Carlisle, Pa., Nov. 15

Troop, Lillie Malcolm, 73, McCune, Kan., July 30

Vargo, Martha A., 91, Windber, Pa., Nov. 16

Walker, Robert Coppock, 94, La Verne, Calif., Nov. 10

Wolford, Mary Alice, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 9

Licensings

Attelus, Servilia, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.), Oct. 13

Aubel, Jean Nixon, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.), Oct. 13

Belony, Fred, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.), Oct. 13

Crandall, Jonathan W., S/C Ind. Dist. (Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind.), Dec. 2

Frantz, Kenneth D., W. Plains Dist., (Haxtun, Colo.), Nov. 20

Guynn, Matthew R., S/C Ind. Dist. (Richmond, Ind.), July 29

Hileman, Leah J., Atl. S.E. Dist. (Christ the Servant, Cape Coral, Fla.), Oct. 13

Marceau, Guillaume, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.), Oct. 13

Palmer, Chad A., N. Ohio Dist. (Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio), Nov. 11

Pierre, Henry K., Atl. S.E. Dist. (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.), Oct. 13

Prejean, Kristie, S. Plains Dist. (Roanoke, La.), Oct. 21

Stoddart, Tracy A., W. Plains Dist. (Koinonia, Grand Junction, Colo.), Dec. 16

Wittmeyer, Jay A., Ill./Wis. Dist. (Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.), Dec. 2

Yunker, Donald L., S. Plains Dist. (Antelope Valley, Billings, Okla.), Sept. 16

Ordinations

Bashore, Ronald M., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.), Nov. 25

Carr, Angela T., Virgina Dist. (Laurel Branch, Floyd, Va.), Nov. 11

Paddock, Clyde, Mo./Ark. Dist. (Messiah, Kansas City, Mo.), Nov. 18

Snyder, Laura Price, W. Plains Dist. (Newton, Kan.), Nov. 25

Striebig, Douglas T., S. Pa. Dist. (New Fairview, York, Pa.), Nov. 11

Placements

Berkebile, James A., associate youth pastor, Center Hill, Champion, Pa., Oct. 1

Cassell, Karen B., assistant pastor, Cloverdale, Va., Nov. 1

Hayes, Timothy L., pastor, Woodworth, Youngstown, Ohio, Nov. 18

Howdyshell, Darren, assistant pastor, Briery Branch, Dayton, Va., Nov. 1

Martin, Michael D., pastor, Glendora, Calif., Dec. 1

Quintrell, Gregory, from pastor, Mathias, W.Va., to pastor, Upper Clear, Claysburg, Pa., Dec. 1

Rice, Larry A., Jr., from interim to pastor, New Salem, Milford, Ind., Dec. 2

Routh, Joseph, from pastor, Paradise, Smithville, Ohio, to pastor, Lakewood, Millbury, Ohio, Sept. 15

Scalf, Dan, pastor, Bradford, Ohio, Oct. 14

Schmidt, James R., chaplain/bereavement coordinator, Horizon Home Health & Hospice, Meridian, Idaho, Aug. 1

Shelton, John G., Jr., from interim pastor to associate pastor, Bradford, Ohio, Oct. 14

Pressured prognosticators

Somewhere in the bayous of Louisiana, a crayfish has been spending a very nervous month.

You see, the Groundhog Day tradition in Cajun country doesn't involve Punxsutawney Phil or any other groundhog. The star, instead, is Claude the Crawfish. If he raises one of his tiny pincers when he comes into the spotlight, it signifies good weather for the upcoming Mardi Gras. If not,

well, Claude gets thrown into the gumbo. "Bad weather, but good eatin'," as they say.

He typically raises those pincers.

"Claude is highly motivated to predict good weather," a local convention and tourism bureau official told the *Shreveport (La.) Times*, "because if he doesn't he knows he goes into the big pot of gumbo. I think he's an optimist."

No pressure there! It takes a lot of guts to speak the truth in a situation like that.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Of course, it takes guts to speak the truth in a lot of situations today. Perhaps that's why truth has become such a precious commodity.

The current administration has been dogged by questions of honesty surrounding the war in Iraq, intelligence, and torture tactics. In the previous administration, those questions revolved around sex and infidelity. On the political campaign trail, accusations constantly fly back and forth about exag-

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In the sports world, the recent report on steroid use in baseball has seen players coming forward with confessions while more questions swirl about who knew what, and used what, and when.

Even the mass media, the supposed watchdogs of the public good, have come under scrutiny. With most of the world's media owned by global conglomerates that have their own self-interests, many feel the ability to be objec-

tive, dig for the truth, and hold leaders accountable has been lost.

And then there's the church, no more immune than the others. A series of national religious leaders have confessed to hidden lives, wrongful use of money, abuse of their position, ethical violations, and other wrongs—often denying it first, and then changing their stories later.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. A 1991 survey reported by James Patterson and Peter Kim in their book *The Day America Told the Truth* showed Americans as chronic liars. Sixty-one percent of respondents had lied to their boss, according to the data, for instance, and 56 percent had lied to co-workers. Up to 86 percent of American adults said they had told "serious lies." Odds are good that those numbers haven't improved in the past 17 years.

"Lying has become a cultural trait in America," the authors concluded. "Lying is embedded in our national character. . . . Americans lie about everything—and usually for no good reason."

Our lack of honesty is a problem, and so is our inability to respond to it. In this atmosphere where lying and denial has become so accepted, it becomes more and more difficult for a voice of truth to speak up. When individuals or congregations do try to be prophetic, it seems they are often drowned out, muted, or even ridiculed. We are much quicker to squelch a dissenting voice than listen for potential insight or divine revelation.

So instead, we remain largely silent in the face of war, injustice, abuse, and other ills lest we be thrown into the

cultural gumbo. But if the church cannot lift up a word of truth, who can?

Maybe we have grown so diverse and so acculturated that we

can no longer make a cohesive statement that challenges the status quo or the latest bandwagon. We have lost our voice. The findings in Brethren sociologist Carl Bowman's recent study of the denomination (see story, p. 14) give some credence to this possibility.

As we poke our heads out into the world around us, we might hope that truth-telling will enjoy the renaissance of an early spring. Ducking back into our holes for another season of dishonesty will only leave us in an ever-greater stew.—Ed. 

COMING IN MARCH: 300th anniversary series profiles of Sarah Righter Major and George Wolfe; reflections on Maundy Thursday; the Irish-ness of Brethren; Bible study on Mark; and more.

When looking to the future, it's good to remember the past.



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