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MESSENGER

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California, here we come

A PREVIEW OF THE 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN SAN DIEGO

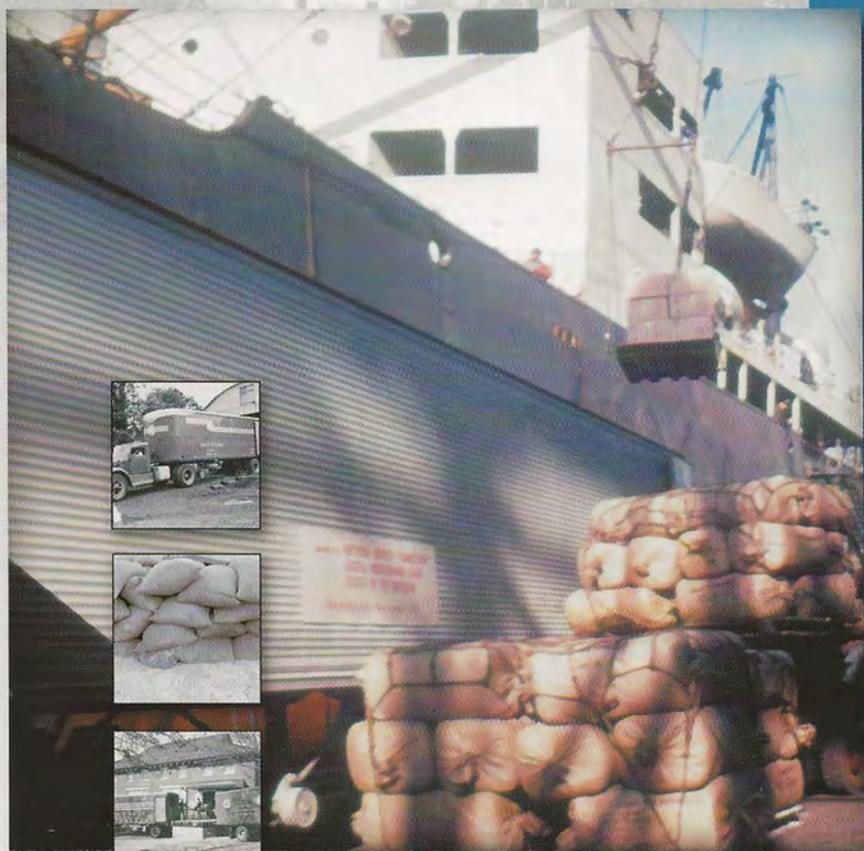


**MODERATOR
DAVID SHUMATE**

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MESSENGER

Editor: Walt Wiltschek Publisher: Wendy McFadden News: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: The Concept Mill



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Church of the Brethren file photo



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ONTHECOVER

The sunny shores of southern California will greet Brethren this year as they gather for Annual Conference in San Diego. This sparkling city, just miles from the Mexican border, now ranks as the eighth-largest in the US. A meaty agenda, however, may limit the sightseeing time for delegates. *Cover background photo of the San Diego skyline by Sarah Pomazal Habben; photo of David Shumate courtesy of the Annual Conference office.*

8 California, here we come: Annual Conference 2009

A collection of stories provides a preview of this year's Annual Conference in San Diego, including a feature on the journey of 2009 Conference moderator David Shumate. Other pieces give an overview of Conference business and the host city, a unique initiative occurring at a southern California seminary, and some fun highlights related to this year's big event.

15 Flashes of fundamentalism

Many historical snapshots didn't fit in last year's heritage series during the denomination's 300th anniversary. This month, Tim Harvey tells the story of Harold Snider—a successful but controversial pastor who opposed the Brethren joining the Federal Council of Churches in the 1940s.

16 Real concern for the 'real' economy

Everyone knows the world's economy has been in turmoil this past year. Church activists at this year's World Social Forum said this is a pivotal moment, when global finances can and must change.

18 Titus and Philemon: Instruction and counsel

These two letters of Paul explain the need for good character and forgiveness. One is a "pastoral epistle" to an assistant in Crete, the other an appeal to a friend and slave-owner.

DEPARTMENTS

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

In "Flatland," an imaginary world of two dimensions, the inhabitants are flat geometrical figures oblivious to the notion of space. From their limited vantage point they can see each other only as edges, so that everyone appears to be a straight line.

When a square visits the one-dimensional world of "Lineland" and has an encounter with an actual line, he realizes how frustratingly limited this simple creature's frame of reference is. The line's entire horizon consists of a point, since he can look only one direction or the other. The square's voice seems to come from his middle, which doesn't make sense to him. And when the square suggests he move off his line, the line is shocked by the idea that he could leave his world.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Then the square travels the other direction: He is visited by a sphere, who takes him on his own mind-altering experience with another dimension. The encounter is both frightening and awe-inspiring. The square has now had a taste of the third dimension, but he is still a citizen of Flatland.

In recent months our world has gone flat. This harsh reality has demanded the attention of all of us. The economy seems like the most pressing issue, but there are others close behind. We face ecological peril. Our world is still at war. Systems and institutions seem frail.

We hear that society is postmodern, post-denominational, post-Christian; the very terminology leaves us unsettled and wondering what comes after *after*.

But Edwin A. Abbott's novella *Flatland*, written 125 years ago, reminds us there's more to our life than what we can see. We can ponder it, try to imagine it, believe in it; but it is impossible for us to completely understand it because it is beyond our dimension.

From the book of Job: "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living" (28:12-13). That is, a point is incapable of comprehending life outside itself. The line cannot comprehend a square. The square cannot comprehend a cube.

We may have trouble imagining what lies beyond our limited sight, but we know that it's there. God's reality is far beyond the bounds of our anxieties. We're dwelling in Flatland, but God is not.

Wendy McFadden

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Subscription rates:

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

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MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © May 2009, Church of the Brethren.

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

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



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

A taste of Jesus' time

Bridgewater love feast attempts to re-create typical meal

"What can we do to create a meaningful love feast experience for our members?" This question was raised at Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren during our annual organizational meeting of deacons serving on the communion committee. One deacon made the suggestion, "Let's serve a meal of foods that Jesus may have eaten at the Last Supper." So began a period of research that resulted in a special meal quite different from our traditional love feast of beef and sop.

Deacons researched information from a variety of sources. Dr. Don Colbert's books, *What Would Jesus Eat?* and *The Ultimate Program for Eating, Feeling Great, and Living Longer* were helpful. We also found information on the Web for articles about typical diet in that part of the world 2,000 years ago. There was support for the theory that red meat was not abundant, and that there was easier access to olives, nuts, figs, dates, and milk products from goats or sheep.

There are relatively few written references to daily foods in the Bible. It seems likely that a main source of protein was fish, and other meats may have been reserved for special meals rather than daily food. While references to eating goat, sheep, and lamb are frequently found in the Bible, they often are mentioned in relation to feasts or special celebrations. Cattle were uncommon, and terms like fatted calf probably do not refer to our type of cattle.

Due to the absence of detailed records, we felt free to interpret our meal with products both affordable and available to us. The menu served was vegetarian, and made use of foods such as goat's cheese, olives, sourdough herbal breads, artichokes, nuts, fruit, and bean products. While it is not known if these elements were part of the Last Supper, all seem to have been typical of the period.

This serving of native foods encouraged us to identify in a more complete way with the experience of Christ at the table with his disciples. It was effective in leading us into an attitude of worship in which the betrayal of Christ and his impending trial and crucifixion seemed to be at hand and very real. We felt our own need for confession and forgiveness. The bread and cup more readily fulfilled their purpose of bringing us into harmony with the occasion and its meaning.

While our love feast meal gave rise to discussions at many tables about the times in which Jesus lived, it was also a time of experimentation in new tastes for many of our members. One 90-year-old in attendance remarked, "If this is what a vegetarian meal is like . . . then I could happily be a vegetarian!" Both he and the deacons were surprised at his response to our meal!

While we do not plan to serve such a love feast menu every Maundy Thursday, we did find this to be a wonderful and unique opportunity to commune with one another. In many ways this menu brought an air of authenticity to our Easter worship experience and helped us to focus on Jesus and this time of his life.

—Lori Lineweaver and Andrea Miracle



Northeast Camp Eder (Fairfield, Pa.) is planning a 50-year anniversary celebration and reunion Aug. 13-15, 2010, including the compilation of a devotional book from submissions by former staff, campers, and volunteers. . . . Karen Duhai of Bedford (Pa.) Church of the Brethren has been called as the new youth ministry coordinator for Middle Pennsylvania District.

Southeast Annual Conference moderator David Shumate headlined this year's Southeastern District Adult Fellowship Rally, April 19 in Sparta, N.C. . . . Camp Bethel (Fincastle, Va.) held its Sounds of the Mountains Story and Music Festival Apr. 24-25. . . . Virginia District held an evangelism-focused conference with the theme "Living Our Faith: Outside the Walls of our Church" March 28 at the Germantown Brick congregation (Rocky Mount, Va.).

Midwest Creekside Church of the Brethren (Elkhart, Ind.) on May 16 will raise money for National Youth Conference with a concert by the band "Sanctified," along with a "blessings of the bikes" and escorted motorcycle ride. . . . Southern Ohio District is having a "fiesta" May 16 at Cristo Nuestra Paz (New Carlisle, Ohio) to celebrate Hispanic ministry. . . . Christian singer Mitch McVicker did a concert March 15 at Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.

Ozarks/Plains A team of four caregivers from the Church of the Brethren's Children's Disaster Services arrived in flood-ravaged Fargo, N.D., March 30 to provide assistance. . . . Inner-city First Central Church of the Brethren (Kansas City, Kan.) partnered with the Washington Creek congregation (Lawrence, Kan.) for a tiny but mighty Foods Resource Bank growing project—a 10x10 sweet potato plot that raised \$70 for hunger relief.

West Idaho District held a "Fifth Sunday" district worship service March 29 at the Fruitland congregation. The evening of music and celebration centered on the theme "God Is . . ." . . . Camp La Verne (Angeles Oaks, Calif.) held its annual banquet and silent auction on Feb. 7. . . . Brethren sociologist Carl Bowman is scheduled to discuss survey findings from his book *Portrait of a People* May 2 at Glendora (Calif.) and May 3 at Modesto (Calif.).



YOU SAID IT

"The Church of the Brethren needs our very best people—young, middle-aged, and older—to consider the call to serve the church and become ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

—Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren pastor Dan Petry, in a sermon to the congregation

BY THE NUMBERS

5,579

Number of Brethren Press Lenten devotional booklets sold this year—an increase of 1,452 from 2008. A significant gift was provided by an individual donor for marketing the series.

Donation of rare books benefits Young Center

Brethren historian Emmert Bittinger on Feb. 26 gave a lecture at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. He and his wife, Esther, also left a gift.

Bittinger, retired professor emeritus of sociology at Bridgewater (Va.) College and an ordained Church of the Brethren minister, donated his collection of rare books to the Young Center. The 70 books, most in German from the 18th and 19th centuries, include several volumes by Brethren writers and the Ephrata Press, as well as a number of Bibles and hymnals, according to the college. The collection, to be known as the Emmert and Esther Bittinger Research Collection, will be housed at the Young Center.

His lecture, titled "Crisis of Conscience: The Shenandoah Anabaptist during the Civil War," examined the experiences of Anabaptists in the



Esther and Emmert Bittinger have donated a unique collection of mostly German-language books to Elizabethtown College's Young Center.

Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in the 1860s. His recent publications include *Unionists and the Civil War Experience*

in the Shenandoah Valley, published by the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center and Valley Research Associates.

A cloud of witnesses surrounds Pa. pastors

When Maple Spring Church of the Brethren (Hollsopple, Pa.) interim pastors John and Linda Stoner need a reminder of all the congregation members they serve, they don't have to look far. They are surrounded by items to do just that.

The Stoners said they were "getting lonely" during office hours, so they invited members of the congregation to bring in an item that identifies them in some way. The items—ranging from crafts, to collectibles, to newspaper clippings—now adorn the bookshelves along the inside wall of the pastor's study.

The Stoners say they now "have the company of the congregation that they've come to love so."

REMEMBERED

• **Connie S. Andes**, 66, a former executive staff member for the Church of the Brethren, died March 2 at Kansas City (Mo.) Hospice House. She served the General Board from 1984 to 1988 as an associate general secretary and executive of the General Services Commission. During her tenure, she was a member of the National Council of Churches Governing Board, served on the Church Leaders Panel charged with integrating Church World Service into the NCC structure, and was a member-at-large of the NCC Executive Committee. Previously, she was director of admissions, alumni director, and associate director of development at McPherson College, beginning in 1979. She held degrees from McPherson College, Wichita State University, and the University of Texas at Austin. The family held a private gathering at the family farm in Missouri for the scattering of ashes.

• **A. Blair Helman**, president of Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., for 30 years, died March 22 at Timbercrest Retirement Community. He was 88. "President Helman's leadership reflected his keen intellect, deep faith, and enduring love for Manchester College," current Manchester president Jo Young Switzer said. Helman served as president from 1956 to 1986. A total of 16 buildings were added to campus during his tenure, and the campus doubled in size. A residence hall at the college bears his name. He served as national chair of the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, and as president of the Indiana Conference of Higher Education. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, Helman also pastored three congregations in Kansas, served on various boards



and committees, and as Annual Conference moderator for 1975-1976. After Bethany Bible Training School in Chicago, he completed his bachelor's degree at McPherson (Kan.) College, and earned his master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. A memorial service was held March 27 in the college's Cordier Auditorium, followed by a reception.

• **Kenneth E. McDowell**, 93, died Feb. 13 in Hanover, Pa. He was a former interim general secretary and executive of the World Ministries Commission of the Church of the Brethren General Board, among other appointments. He retired in 1980 after 27 years of service to the church. He began working for the General Board in 1953 as a mission worker in India. On his return, he worked for nine years as assistant treasurer in the Finance Commission. In 1966 he was appointed director of material aid services in the Brethren Service Commission, with responsibility for a network of Church World Service collection and processing centers operated by the Church of the Brethren, as well as oversight of SERRV and processing and shipping of supplies for IMA. In 1968, he added community development consultant and director of disaster response to his responsibilities. From 1977 to 1979 he headed the World Ministries Commission. In retirement, he served as interim executive for World Ministries from the end of 1984 through mid-1985, and as interim general secretary for several months in 1986. An ordained minister, he held degrees from Juniata College and Bethany Theological Seminary.

• **Alma "Jerry" Crist Whitman**, wife of the man once known as "America's Favorite Folksinger," Slim Whitman, died Feb. 16 in Florida. She was 84. The Whitmans, who were married for 67 years, have lived in Middleburg, Fla., since 1955. Her father, A.D. Crist, helped to found the nearby Clay County Church of the Brethren. The funeral was held Feb. 21 at the church.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Donnels Creek Church of the Brethren**, located near Springfield, Ohio, will celebrate its 200th anniversary on May 17. Former pastor Mel Menker will be the guest speaker for two worship services, followed by a carry-in dinner and entertainment.

• **Ray Warner**, a member of Eden (N.C.) First Church of the Brethren and former long-time deacon chair there, celebrated his 100th birthday April 5 at the church.

• The *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News* on March 9 featured **Sylvia Utz**, a member of Pittsburg Church of the Brethren (Arcanum, Ohio) now living at the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville. Utz turned 110 that day, and the retirement community planned a big celebration. Utz, who still has a sharp mind and walks with a walker, enjoys doing word finds, according to the article. "I don't have an ache or a pain," Utz told the paper. Her older sister, Delcie Cress, lived to age 109.

• **Erwin (Tenn.) Church of the Brethren**, destroyed in a fire last June, held a groundbreaking service for its new building on March 15. A mission group from Alabama called "Carpenters for Christ" has volunteered its services to rebuild the church, which was underinsured; a team of 60 to 70 people are expected to begin on June 2 and complete the project in 10 days. "Tears came to my eyes to see how God is working," Erwin pastor Phil Graeber said.

• An On Earth Peace and Christian Peacemaker Teams-sponsored peacemaking **delegation to the Middle East** in January received international attention, as Yahoo news reported on the delegation's participation in a peace witness action with medical personnel and journalists in Hebron. Delegation member Renee Arbisi was also interviewed by the Al Jazeera news network.

• **Brook Lane Health Services** of Hagerstown, Md., which is affiliated with the Church of the Brethren, plans to celebrate its 60th anniversary June 12-14. A variety of special events, including an ice cream and croquet social, will take place on the main campus through the weekend.

• Popular speaker/author Tony Campolo will headline the 20th anniversary celebration banquet for the **Brethren Housing Association** of Harrisburg, Pa., on Sept. 15.

• Church of the Brethren representative **Rex Miller**, executive director of Camp Mack in Milford, Ind., was among those who approved and signed on to a Green Camp and Conference Center Covenant through the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program in late January. The covenant can be read (and signed) at www.ncccecojustice.org/campcovenant.html.

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Four days deep

Every so often, life presents moments when you are suddenly aware of the pseudo-life that you have been living and you long to unearth what's been lost. In doing so, you never see the world the way you did before.

That moment occurred for me when I attended a wilderness survival school nearly two years ago. I had put pastoral ministry on hold a year earlier because it had become so empty to me. I sensed that God was calling me into a wilderness period. Little did I know that it would be just as literal as it would be figurative.



RANDALL WESTFALL

While at wilderness survival school, I was reminded of God's words spoken to Israel through the prophet Hosea: "I will guide you into the wilderness, and it is there that I will reclaim your heart" (2:14). Up until that moment, my life had been the perfect preparation for something that was now trying to be born through me.

There is something mysterious about the wilderness; it represents the unknown. What we don't know, we fear; and what we fear, we have no desire to understand. The same can be said of our own "inner" wilderness. Each one of us has this earthy, untamed, undomesticated part of our soul; it's our "wild within," and most have no desire to understand it, let alone let it live through us. Since about the age of 5, we've

wilderness trip, it seems to take about four days for people to start dreaming nature dreams rather than 'busy' or 'urban' dreams. This recurring pattern suggests to me that our culture is only four days deep."

If our culture only has a four-day hold, then the challenge becomes clear. We must find a way to free ourselves from that restraint for at least four days. Schedule a retreat. Turn off your screens, and take in natural scenes. Participate in a vision quest. Vacation in the Grand Canyon. Do everything you can to break free from the frantic pace of society, because it is killing us: mind, body, and soul.

We have lost the art of detachment; that is why we are such an addictive society. Wilderness re-teaches us detachment and breaks us of our addictions. For me, time in nature helps to break that grasp. It is there that I encounter a Creator who isn't filtered through cultural assumptions. It was out of that initial wilderness encounter that I reclaimed my heart's longing: to lead people back into the wild to reconnect to the earth, our souls, one another, and to the Creator.

Imagine what could happen if the church were to enter into a wilderness time. What could we learn about ourselves? The church and the North American mindset have slowly been converging over the past few decades, and the church can no longer have natural dreams or visions about what we should be. Instead our dreams are mired around culture, which might be why we ask questions that have nothing to do with Christ—who is our sole (or better said, our "soul") reference point. Only when we make that shift

SCHEDULE A RETREAT. TURN OFF YOUR SCREENS, AND TAKE IN NATURAL SCENES. PARTICIPATE IN A VISION QUEST. VACATION IN THE GRAND CANYON. DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO BREAK FREE FROM THE FRANTIC PACE OF SOCIETY, BECAUSE IT IS KILLING US: MIND, BODY, AND SOUL.

covered over our wildness in order to be more civilized.

I believe wildness is not all that different from what it means to have child-like faith. As children we were, by nature, full of wonder, awe, and awareness. We got dirty and took risks because we were full of curiosity and adventure—full of life! Very few people in the church are living from this place, and that may be why the church is dying. We place too much emphasis on "acting your age," and over time the wildness becomes dulled and tamed.

In order to reclaim our hearts and our wild within, I believe it means being led back into the wilderness.

Robert Greenway, an eco-psychologist who has led many retreats into the wilderness, makes this observation: "On a

does the possibility of our dreams become less of what we think our life should be and more of what God calls us to be.

The wilderness experience also shaped our biblical ancestors: the Israelites, the prophets, John the Baptist, and even Jesus. They set the model for us. Now we must allow ourselves to be led into our own wildernesses. Only there can we be taught what we need to know and be healed where we need it most. And I'm convinced that when we live from that place in our hearts, we will always enter the Kingdom as children. 

Randall Westfall is a wilderness instructor, musician, and licensed minister living in Lena, Ill. He attends Lanark (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.

“To close part of ourselves to God is to fail to worship God truly and fully.”

—Chris Whitacre, chaplain at The Cedars retirement community in McPherson, Kan., and a member of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board. He was leading devotions for the board on facing challenges and crises

“It is perhaps in the most difficult of circumstances that churches show the most generous form of Christianity.”

—World Council of Churches staff member Henrik Hansson, writing about Christian communities in Pakistan and their ongoing service to local Muslims amid violence

“We tend to forget the good things in our lives when we are in a slump.”

—ordained Disciples of Christ pastor Arlene Franks of Washington, D.C., writing about the job search process in *DisciplesWorld* magazine

“People are waking up to the truth that the kingdom of God looks like Jesus and that the heart of Christianity is simply imitating him.”

—Greg Boyd, Baptist pastor and theologian from Minneapolis, in an address to Mennonites about religious trends and Anabaptism’s relevance to them. His writings were quoted by Paul Schrag in *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

“The problems of extreme poverty are visible only occasionally. We see them after the L.A. riots or we see them after Katrina or we see them when food banks are strained in a severe recession, but those problems don’t disappear in between.”

—Michael Gerson, speechwriter for former President George W. Bush and now co-chair, with Jim Wallis, of the bipartisan Poverty Forum

“We are still a solvent organization, and that is good news.”

—LeAnn Wine, executive director of Systems and Services for the Church of the Brethren, in a financial report for the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board. Despite significant losses in 2008, the organization had nearly \$23 million in net assets at the end of the year.

“We believe that war is not the solution to the differences that divide peoples. Dialogue can make a real difference.”

—Dr. John Brademas, former US Congressman and president emeritus of New York University, who served as moderator for a dinner and conversation last fall between Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and US religious and political leaders

CULTUREVIEW

• Support for refugees living in North Carolina’s Research Triangle area and Greensboro is being strengthened with the opening of two new **Church World Service (CWS) resettlement offices**. On Feb. 1, CWS opened its new office in Durham, which will conduct resettlement activities and provide support to refugees in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area. CWS expected to open its refugee resettlement sub-office in Greensboro in March.

• Leaders from 67 religious and humanitarian organizations have asked President Barack Obama to **reconsider US opposition to global treaties** that prohibit the use and transfer of landmines and cluster munitions. The Mine Ban Treaty was signed by 122 governments in December 1997, and there are currently 156 member states, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The new Convention on Cluster Munitions was signed by 94 states in December 2008. The United States has not signed

either. (RNS)

• The **United Methodist Church’s** General Board of Global Ministries announced in March that it was reducing its 2009 operating budget by 7 percent, about \$3.9 million (*United Methodist Reporter*).

• The United Church of Christ newspaper, **United Church News**, will end its newsprint edition later this year and move online its delivery of denominational news, according to a UCC report. The decision was made on March 20 by the board of directors of the Office of General Ministries, which has been struggling with skyrocketing costs for the newspaper’s production. Postage and printing costs have more than doubled during the past five years.

• A brief survey of Mennonite congregations in 2007-2008 found that 39 percent of members **participated in a foot-washing service** in a given year, according to an article by Bob Brenneman in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.



JUST FOR FUN: DID YOU KNOW?

SHIFTING IDENTIFICATIONS Religious self-identification of the US adult population in 1990 and in the past year, according to findings of the American Religious Identification Survey released March 9. More than 54,000 people were surveyed in the 2008 study (RNS).

1990

- Total Christians: 86.2 percent
- Catholic: 26.2 percent
- Other Christians: 60.0 percent
- Other religions: 3.3 percent
- Nones (no religious identification): 8.2 percent
- Don’t know/refused: 2.3 percent

2008

- Total Christians: 76.0 percent
- Catholic: 25.1 percent
- Other Christian: 50.9 percent
- Other religions: 3.9 percent
- Nones (no religious identification): 15.0 percent
- Don’t know/refused: 5.2 percent

COUNTRY ROADS: A MODERATOR'S JOURNEY

by Walt Wiltschek

FROM WEST VIRGINIA TO SAN DIEGO, DAVID SHUMATE'S CALL CONTINUES



David Shumate has been called a lot of things: West Virginian, Virginian, retail employee, numbers guy, seminary student, pastor, district executive, husband, father—and probably a few he wouldn't want to repeat.

This year he's added another one to the list: moderator of the Church of the Brethren. In that highest elected office in the denomination, he will sit front and center at the June 26-30 Annual Conference in San Diego, guiding delegates through a meaty business agenda.

"I have found it to be a tremendous professional growth experience," Shumate says of his year in the role, following a year as moderator-elect. "I know I got to a few places I wouldn't have gotten to as quickly."

The journey has taken him to 13 of the denomination's 23 US districts, covering more than 20 states, as well as four countries. Even more significant, though, is the journey that has brought him to this newest calling.

• • •

Shumate grew up in tiny Crab Orchard, W.Va., a few miles from the larger city of Beckley ("Just tell them you're from Beckley," his mother advised him), and lived in the area until he was 23.

He went to the town's Baptist church. The other one—the only other one—in Crab Orchard was the Church of the Brethren, where most of his "kin" attended. He estimates he's related to about 80 percent of that congregation. He liked the liturgy and high-quality worship at the Baptist church, however, as opposed to the less formal Brethren service.

As young as age 13, he began to feel a sense of call to the ministry, but "I don't think I really knew what to do with it," Shumate says, the West Virginia drawl still thick in his speech. Over the next few years, his church involvement waned, and with it his sense of call.

That changed when he began dating a young woman who was

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009 *California, here we come*

How exciting is it to work in Virlina District? Annual Conference moderator David Shumate and other members of the district staff and Camp Bethel staff jump for joy at the district offices in Roanoke, Va. (part of a series of jumping photos being taken around the denomination).



Kevin Dubeaux

involved in the Brethren church, and he started attending there, as well. It was a smaller church, and he was quickly given responsibility—beginning with the job of putting all the hymnals back in their places each week. Later he became an usher, which fit nicely with his love of counting things.

He planned to go into accounting, actually. He liked numbers and their clean-cut solutions—something that's not always the case in ministry. He went to Beckley College and Concord College with that goal and then worked in retail for four years.

Amid all that, his girlfriend's father, who had become a significant role model, passed away. Later that year, Shumate's relationship with his girlfriend ended, as well. It led him to some deep thinking, and he mentioned to his Brethren pastor that he was feeling a nudge toward ministry again.

His pastor contacted then-district executive Owen Stultz, who battled a blizzard to come to West Virginia and meet with Shumate. Stultz encouraged him to attend Bethany Theological Seminary near the big city of Chicago.

"Owen was very helpful to me in that process," Shumate says. "I knew it would be a major culture shock for me, and it was."

• • •

Shumate met the woman who would become his wife during that discernment time, and he and Dorothy were married in

March 1981, moving to Oak Brook, Ill., a few months later.

He enjoyed seminary and did an internship, then requested a position where he could further test his call as an interim pastor. He asked for "someplace where I could flunk quietly," he jokes. That opportunity came at Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Lowpoint, Ill., which was celebrating its centennial. He and the church both survived.

After another couple of years of classes and short-term placements, he told Stultz he wanted to return to his native Virlina District. Shumate asked if any congregations were available and would take a fresh seminary graduate.

One did: The Pulaski congregation in southwest Virginia, which at the time had two meeting houses (Pulaski and Hiwasee). He stayed there almost eight years, starting a Bible study that continues at Hiwasee. To this day, Shumate makes an annual trip there to celebrate its anniversary with a cake.

"They were very patient with me," Shumate says. "I don't know that I accomplished a lot as pastor, but I had a good time."

It was there that he became involved with community and ecumenical programs, including serving as president for the county ministers' group and chairing the local FEMA board. He also was elected to Virlina's district board, serving on the ministry commission. Until then, he says, he had usually been seen as "a clown" who was good at relieving stress; on the board,

“THE NO. 1 ISSUE . . . IS WE NEED TO EXPEND LESS ENERGY TALKING AND REORGANIZING OUR STRUCTURE, **AND MORE TIME SPENT ON VISION AND MINISTRY.** THE SECOND THING IS TO GET OUR FOCUS OFF HOW LITTLE WE HAVE AND THINK ABOUT HOW WE USE WHAT WE DO HAVE.

though, he had to be a troubleshooter who dealt with difficult ministry ethics situations and other disciplinary issues.

"People on the district board saw me in a different light," he says.

When Stultz announced his retirement, he supported Shumate in applying for the position. For Shumate, it seemed a natural blend of his background in business administration and ministry. "I perceived being district executive as a call," he says. "It felt right to me."

The search committee agreed. Shumate began his new role in Roanoke in January 1993.

. . .

While in Pulaski, another pivotal event occurred for the Shumates. In 1987 they had a son, John, who was born prematurely and was severely autistic.

"It's probably the most profound thing that's happened to either of us," Shumate says.

He says it taught him to shift his thinking away from valuing people for what they produce to valuing them simply for who they are. Those learnings had an impact in viewing his ministry, as well.

"The church is not about what people do or not do," he says, "but how each one of us incarnates the living image of God in our midst."

When the family moved to Daleville Church of the Brethren in 1993, they built a new support network for their son. Through connections with the Old German Baptist Brethren in Franklin County, Va., they met Eloise Bowman, who worked with John and became "like a third parent" for him, Shumate says.

Meanwhile, Shumate grew into his new role as district executive. He concentrated on leadership development, financial resources, community building, and new church

development—areas that continue to be at the heart of his work.

He also became increasingly involved ecumenically, serving on the coordinating cabinet for the Virginia Council of



Church of the Brethren file photo

Churches and even serving as president for one term.

"That's something that's been very, very vital to me," Shumate says. "I think I most know what it means to be Brethren when I'm with people who aren't. When we're together, we spend too much time navel-gazing."

He also enjoys teaching and preaching whenever he can ("I don't consider myself a polished preacher," he says, "but I like to preach. It's me.") and getting out to the many congregations of his district, one of the denomination's largest and most varied. In fact, he says one of his goals for the coming years in his work is "to spend more time just being with people, especially pastors."

Emma Jean Woodard, Virlina's associate executive, praised Shumate as "a dedicated district executive minister with a very strong work ethic."

"He loves the Lord and cares deeply for the church and the kingdom of God," she adds. (She also says his driving "has increased the prayer life of many individuals.")

Shumate admits he often works more than he should, and there are always new challenges, even after 17 years on the job. But the district has been good at giving him sabbatical time, too. He values that, especially for the opportunity to be present with his family as much as possible.

Other aspirations like teaching history or running for political office or even crunching those quiet numbers have occasionally tugged at him, but the church's call hasn't gone away.

"I think about alternate things I could do," he says, "but I've always come back."

. . .

David Shumate will have more time at home again once his moderator duties conclude at the end of Annual Conference, but he says he has treasured this opportunity.

He has enjoyed the fellowship of Brethren near and far—even starting his own Facebook page—and the chance for more ecumenical involvement, most notably with Christian Churches Together. He also has heard Brethren share their concerns for the future of the church, particularly in this year when economic issues have been so prevalent. On the whole, though, he says he's been surprised that people haven't been "bending his ear" on various topics as much as he expected.

“THE CHURCH IS NOT ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE DO OR NOT DO, BUT HOW EACH ONE OF US INCARNATES **THE LIVING IMAGE OF GOD IN OUR MIDST.**”

Out of those experiences and his own journey, Shumate names a few primary issues for the church: "I think the No. 1 issue . . . is we need to expend less energy talking and reorganizing our structure, and more time spent on vision and ministry. The second thing is to get our focus off how little we have and think about how we use what we do have.

"I think we're at a point in history where we have a lot of opportunities, and we need to avail ourselves of those opportunities."

That transitional point comes through in the theme he fashioned for this year's Annual Conference: "The old has gone. The new has come. All this is from God."

Shumate says he likes that sense of balance, something he tries to live out himself both theologically and practically. He is an avid historian, so he has an appreciation for the church's past, as well as its need to move into the future. Coming off last year's 300th anniversary celebration, he says this year is a time to look ahead, noting that God is the continuity in the story even amid challenge.

"The church has weathered this stuff before," Shumate says. "The church has endured."

The journey continues. Next stop: San Diego. 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He interviewed David Shumate in March.

ON THE AGENDA

The 2009 Annual Conference will address five items of new business: a paper from Standing Committee titled "A Statement of Confession and Commitment," a revision of the document "A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues," revised bylaws for the Church of the Brethren, and two queries:

"Query: Language on Same-Sex



Covenantal Relationships" and "Query: Secret Oath-Bound Societies."

Business sessions will be led by moderator David Shumate,

executive minister for Virginia District. No items of unfinished business are scheduled. Also on the agenda will be elections for denominational offices, reports from agencies of the church and committees of the Conference, and other items of information.

• **"A Statement of Confession and Commitment"** was adopted by Standing Committee at last year's Annual Conference. The one-page document addresses the issue of homosexuality as one that "continues to bring tension and division within our Body" and

confesses, "We are not of one mind on this matter." The statement declares that the church's 1983 paper on Human Sexuality "remains our official position" but also acknowledges tension between different parts of the 1983 paper. The statement confesses "meanness and fighting" over the issue and calls on the church to stop un-Christian behavior.

• The revision of the **document for dealing with strongly controversial issues** follows up on a decision of the 2002 Conference, which referred an update of the original 1988 document to the former Annual Conference Council. The council in turn appointed a committee to update the paper and present a revision. The revision gives guidelines for how Standing Committee and Annual Conference will identify and deal with queries that may generate adversarial stances. The proposed three-year process includes appointment of a "Resource Committee" representing diverse perspectives on the issue to develop study materials; facilitating hearings at Annual Conference and in districts; and a special procedure for presenting such queries to the Conference.

• **"Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships"** was initiated by Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., and approved by Northern Indiana District. Stating in part that the denomination "has a history and practice of seeking

reconciliation" and that it "has experienced deep division and brokenness related to the language from the 1983 Human Sexuality Paper that same-sex covenantal relationships are not acceptable," the query petitions Conference "to consider whether it is the will of the church that this language on same-sex covenantal relationships will continue to guide our journey together."

• **"Query: Secret Oath-Bound Societies"** was initiated by Dry Run (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and approved by Southern Pennsylvania District. Citing a number of scriptures, among others 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 8:31-32, Matthew 5:33-34, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, and Ephesians 5:7-17, the query states in part that "it is clear that membership in these societies constitutes a dual allegiance" and that there is confusion among Brethren about secret oath-bound societies. The query requests Conference to take action to give clarity to the issue.

• **Revised bylaws for the Church of the Brethren** follow the decision of last year's Annual Conference approving merger of the former Association of Brethren Caregivers with the former General Board to form a new entity called Church of the Brethren Inc.—**Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is director of news services for the Church of the Brethren.



The Town & Country Resort is on San Diego's Hotel Circle, north of downtown.

Courtesy of Town & Country Resort

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

Where: San Diego, Calif. (population 1,256,951), Town & Country Resort

When: June 26-30, with some related events beginning June 23

Theme: "The Old Has Gone, The New Has Come, All This Is From God" (based on 2 Cor. 5:16-21)

Projected attendance: The Conference office has set a goal of 2,800 to 3,000 people, counting delegates and non-delegates

Fees: Delegates, \$245; non-delegates, \$75 for adults and \$25 for ages 12-21 for the full conference if pre-registered online, \$100 and \$43, respectively, for onsite registration. Special rates are available for weekend only, Sunday only,

and daily participants, and for current Brethren Volunteer Service workers.

Unique features: Annual Conference executive director Lerry Fogle (who is retiring after this Conference) says the Town & Country Resort will be "one of the more unique venues in which we've had Conference," with a "cozy and comfortable" setting. Most attendees will be staying at the resort, which will also host all business and worship events and exhibit areas. It has five restaurants onsite, and there will be an outdoor cash buffet. . . . The Conference schedule shifts back a day this year, beginning on a Friday and ending on Tuesday instead of the usual Saturday-Wednesday format.

HEAVENLY HOGS

For many Brethren, it's a long trip to San Diego. For at least one, though, every mile will be savored.

Paul Liepelt, pastor of Dranesville Church of the Brethren (Herndon, Va.) is organizing a cross-country motorcycle ride to Annual Conference. Dubbed "Hogs for Heifers," the ride will benefit the construction of the new Heifer Global Village at Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center in Sharpsburg, Md. (A grand opening celebration for the first phase is taking place May 9).

"It's a good opportunity to ride all the way cross-country, and then make it profit for something as well," Liepelt says. He decided to aid the Heifer Global Village after volunteering as a counselor at Shepherd's Spring last summer and talking with director Ann Cornell.

The idea for this trip began after he rode his motorcycle from Connecticut to the National Young Adult Conference in Colorado in 2004, and from frequent motorcycle rides and an outreach to riders while serving with his wife in Nigeria.

"I try to tie in motorcycles wherever I go," says Liepelt, who has been riding since he was 16. "It's my hobby."

The Hogs caravan (currently just Liepelt, although he's hoping for others—contact him at dcobpastor@aol.com or 703-430-8835) plans to depart the East Coast on June 22, following a prayer and dedication service at Shepherd's Spring, and make the 3,000-mile trek in five days. Other riders are welcome to join along the



route, Liepelt says. Each rider is asked to get pledges per mile.

Church of the Brethren congregations along the route have agreed to host the riders for most of

the nights, cutting down on lodging expenses and providing opportunities for fellowship. On the way out, Cabool (Mo.) Church of the Brethren, Clovis (N.M.), and Papago Buttes (Scottsdale, Ariz.) are providing hospitality. One night will be spent in southwestern Ohio. The return route will go through Utah and a stop at Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo.

Liepelt says he hopes to make the Annual Conference ride an annual event.—**Walt Wiltschek**

Otherwise, however, the schedule will be mostly similar to previous years. . . . Saturday evening will feature an extended worship time with a cross-cultural flavor. Musical group A Cappella will give a concert Sunday evening, followed by a free ice cream social.

Key business items: Moderator David Shumate says this year's agenda contains business items that are "profound for the future of the church." Five items are expected on the agenda (see sidebar, p. 11), in addition to a series of reports and updates. Shumate says he hopes delegates approach the agenda with the "three P's": patience, perseverance, and pacifism.

Worship: Services will take place Friday and Saturday evenings, Sunday morning, Monday evening, and Tuesday morning. Speakers, in order, are Shumate; Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren ministry team member Dick Shreckhise; Episcopal priest and multicultural ministry consultant Eric H.F. Law; Church of the Brethren Dominican Republic mission co-coordinator Nancy Heishman; and Castañer (P.R.) Church of the Brethren pastor Jaime Diaz. Program and Arrangements Committee member Scott Duffey serves as worship coordinator this year.

Church setting: San Diego is in the denomination's Pacific Southwest District and is home to San Diego First Church of the Brethren (3850 Westgate Place, www.sdbrethrenchurch.org). It is also the site of the unique Friends Center, an environmental project being built on the church's property in partnership with other groups. Open



Dick Shreckhise



Eric H.F. Law



Nancy Heishman



Jaime Diaz

DID YOU KNOW?

Jody Gerut, an outfielder for the San Diego Padres baseball team, has roots in the Church of the Brethren. Gerut was born in Elmhurst, Ill., and grew up in nearby Lombard, where he attended York Center Church of the Brethren as a child and teenager.

He went on to attend Stanford University in California, earning a degree in history, before entering the baseball draft. He made his Major League Baseball debut in April 2003 with the Cleveland Indians, where he played regularly the next two and a half seasons before being traded in mid-2005 to the Chicago Cubs and soon thereafter to the Pittsburgh Pirates.

A knee injury kept him out the next two seasons, but he resurfaced last year with San Diego, playing in 100 games for the Padres and hitting .296 with 14 home runs and 43 RBI. Gerut, 31, is expected to play center field for the Padres (who have a home series against the Houston Astros June 29-July 2) again this year.



house tours of the center are tentatively planned to be available around the time of Annual Conference. About a dozen other Brethren congregations and fellowships are located elsewhere in southern California, along with the University of La Verne.

What to see: Sunny San Diego, often characterized as having the most perfect weather in the nation, does not lack for tourism options. Some highlights include Balboa Park with the San Diego Zoo and various museums, SeaWorld, the historic Gaslamp Quarter, Old Town, Wild Animal Park, Birch Aquarium, and various beaches. LEGOLAND California is located in nearby Carlsbad. Fashion Valley mall, with a large food court, is located just behind the Town & Country Resort, along with a trolley system providing access to much of the San Diego area. The San Diego Padres baseball team has a homestand beginning June 29 at PETCO Park.

For more information: Visit www.brethren.org/ac. 

A FULLER EMBRACE OF ANABAPTISM

by Walt Wiltschek

NOTED SEMINARY PLANS TO START ENDOWED CHAIR IN ANABAPTIST STUDIES

One may not think of southern California as a major hotbed of Anabaptist study and culture, but that has been changing in the past decade—in large part due to the work and influence of Fuller Theological Seminary.

The Pasadena school, long known as an evangelical force, increasingly came to find the Radical Reformation's Anabaptist movement as "one of the natural dialogue partners" with Fuller's Reformed base, School of Theology dean Howard Loewen says. At least half a dozen faculty now "identify explicitly" with the Anabaptist tradition, according to Loewen, and a number of others "have warm feelings toward it."

Among those faculty members is Nancey Murphy, a member of Pasadena Church of the Brethren and an ordained minister in the denomination. Murphy grew up Catholic but encountered Anabaptism through her late husband, Jim McClendon, after they met at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif.

McClendon had grown up Baptist, but became intrigued by the writing of John Howard Yoder, a prominent Mennonite theologian and author. McClendon began teaching a seminar in Anabaptist theology and ethics at Berkeley, which Murphy took. As she read Yoder and others, she, too, was drawn in by Anabaptist beliefs and practice.

"I decided I needed to join a church where pacifism was central rather than an add-on," Murphy says. They didn't find a church that fit what they were seeking in the Bay area, but they did when Murphy was hired at Fuller in 1989. They moved to Pasadena and there encountered the Church of the Brethren. They liked the theology and the people and "pretty quickly joined up," Murphy says.

She found Fuller very open to Anabaptism from the beginning, and that has only grown over the years. She says many students from other traditions have become connected to the Anabaptist tradition at Fuller. One is an intern at the Church of the Brethren; a number of others attend Pasadena Mennonite Church, which shares a building with the Brethren congregation. An Anabaptist prayer and worship group has often met on campus.

Loewen says the Anabaptist presence, which may include about 50 students, adds to a "rich mix" at Fuller, which has some 4,500 students representing more than 120 denominations. He believes Anabaptism brings fresh gifts in areas such as biblical study, christology, peace and justice, and reconciliation.

"I think (the Anabaptist tradition) has become a significant part of Fuller's DNA," he says. "A tremendous gift that Fuller can provide for the Anabaptist tradition is to give it a platform

and a voice and a Ph.D.-level training context that can supplement nicely the good work going on in the tradition's own theological seminaries."

As a further step toward that goal, Murphy had proposed a chair in Anabaptist studies named after McClendon. About the same time, retired faculty member Wilbur Shenk had proposed a chair in Mennonite studies, named after Yoder. The two ideas were brought together, and funding for the Yoder-McClendon Chair in Anabaptist Studies is now under way.

"The idea is that this person would be a nucleus who would pull together all the Anabaptist people and influences that have developed at Fuller over the past 10 or so years," says Murphy, who will herself teach Anabaptist theology and ethics for the first time at Fuller next year. The position would eventually enable Ph.D. studies in the field not currently available anywhere else, along with mentoring and relationship-building in the Anabaptist community.

Murphy emphasizes that Fuller doesn't want to compete with Bethany Theological Seminary or Mennonite schools. Instead, she hopes Fuller fills a unique niche. It offers studies in particular ethnic traditions—Korean, African-American, and Hispanic—that could prove valuable in Anabaptist ministry training and church planting efforts, she says.

In addition, Fuller's West Coast location could make face-to-face training possible for some Mennonites and Brethren who are unable to relocate. Many current Brethren and Mennonite seminary graduates have been unable or unwilling to move to the West, so training in the local context could fill a need. Fuller has been in dialogue with Anabaptist seminaries and local district executive ministers to chart the best path forward, Murphy says.

The Yoder-McClendon Chair will need a total of \$2.5 million in endowment to be established, according to Loewen. Fundraising has been slowed by the economic recession, he says, forcing the timeline to be pushed back. He still hopes for a "major academic event" to formally launch the new initiative on campus as soon as 2009-2010.

"There are some exciting developments in this area," Loewen says of the Anabaptist emphasis. "The story is yet to be completed. I think it's just begun." ❧



Nancey Murphy

FLASHES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by Tim Harvey

HAROLD SNIDER OPPOSED BRETHREN JOINING FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN 1940s

Harold Snider was one of the most effective Brethren pastors in the first half of the 20th century. He was also one of the most controversial.

Born in 1900 in Waynesboro, Pa., Brother Snider was the pastor of two Church of the Brethren congregations: first in Martinsburg, W.Va., then in Lewistown, Pa., beginning in 1941. During his tenure as pastor, both congregations experienced significant growth. The Martinsburg church grew from a part-time to a full-time pastoral program during his tenure; the Lewistown congregation grew to have more than 800 members.

But in spite of his success as an evangelist, Brethren history remembers Harold Snider most for the controversy generated by his opposition to the Brethren joining the Federal Council of Churches (FCC)—a controversy that ultimately led to the division of the Lewistown congregation.

In 1941, the Brethren Joint Council of Boards sent a resolution to Standing Committee requesting membership in the FCC. This resolution had the backing of many ecumenically minded church leaders of the day, most notably M.R. Zigler. This ecumenical desire was born out of Brethren encounters with the widespread suffering caused by events leading up to World War II.

Brethren had served in many foreign fields in the 1930s and 1940s, and along with seeing much suffering they had encountered leaders of other Christian denominations doing similar work. The rationale for joining the FCC was to “give Protestantism a strong voice in the many strategic situations which now exist throughout the world” (Annual Conference Minutes, 1923-1944, p. 162). Delegates at the 1941 La Verne, Calif., Annual Conference overwhelmingly approved joining the FCC.

The decision angered ardent supporters of fundamentalism like Harold Snider. They saw the leaders of both the Church of the Brethren and the FCC as departing from the doctrines of true

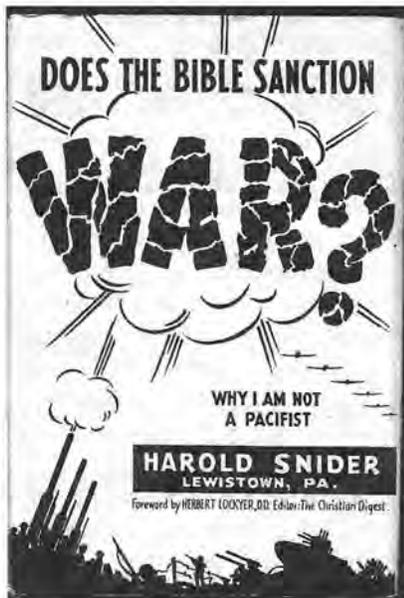
Christianity. Snider accused denominational leaders of forcing a controversial item of business through the La Verne Conference too quickly, and of not printing his own viewpoints in the *Gospel Messenger*. He accused the FCC of supporting modernism; of denying the inerrancy of the Scriptures; of economic plans that resembled socialism; and of seeking change through government action.

Because of his increasing frustration with Brethren leadership, Snider began publishing his own magazine. Beginning in 1945, Snider published *The Christian Beacon*, which was soon renamed *The Brethren Fundamentalist*. These publications fueled the fundamentalist debates of the 1940s, in large part to Snider’s incendiary language. Brethren leaders were compared to “Stalin” and “Hitler,” highly insulting names considering the recent events of World War II. When district and denominational leadership began to seek resolution to the controversy, they were accused of attempting to “purge” the denomination of fundamentalism.

These attempts to resolve the situation were unsuccessful. The controversy finally came to a head in 1948, when district leadership removed Snider’s ministerial credentials and asked him to vacate the pulpit and the parsonage of the Lewistown church. Snider predictably refused, and attempted to take the congregation out of the Church of the Brethren. A minority of Lewistown members sought to remain with the Church of the Brethren, and the question of who had proper right to the church property was settled in court. The court awarded the property to the group who wished to remain faithful to the Church of the Brethren.

Snider took the rest of the congregation and formed Calvary Independent Church (renamed Calvary Bible Church), where he served as pastor until 1959. Harold Snider died in Arizona in 1993. 

Tim Harvey is pastor of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va. Information for this article came from sources including *Fruit of the Vine* and *The Brethren in an Age of World War* as well as materials written by Snider.



Courtesy of Brethren Historical Library and Archives

During the denomination's 300th anniversary celebration in 2008, *MESSNGER* ran a series of articles featuring events and personalities from the past. Space was insufficient to tell all those stories, so the magazine will continue periodically to share some of those glimpses of our history, such as this one of a controversial pastor in the first half of the 20th century.

REAL CONCERN FOR THE 'REAL' ECONOMY

by Juan Michel

CHURCH ACTIVISTS SAYS GLOBAL FINANCES CAN AND MUST CHANGE

As the global financial system falters, many civil society and church activists see the crisis as an opportunity to press for long-overdue, radical reforms.

For once, advocates for economic justice seem not to be alone in recognizing the need for changes in global finances. Stock markets faltering around the planet and giant banks falling into bankruptcy have convinced governments of the richest countries that they have to do something, especially as the financial crisis impacts the "real" economy with massive layoffs in companies affected by the global credit crunch and shrinking consumer markets.

"But there is a fundamental difference of approach between those who try to re-fund financial capitalism and those who see a need for a shift of paradigm in the world's economy," says Brazilian economist Marcos Arruda, from the Institute on Policy Alternatives for the Southern Cone (PACS). "What is needed is not just some regulations here and there, but real alternatives to the current system which represent a profound transformation."

Arruda was a speaker on proposals for a new international financial architecture at a panel discussion sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) during this winter's World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil. This forum is the biggest global gathering of the "alter-globalization" movement, which seeks to resist exploitative economic globalization—instead promoting alternative, value-based forms of social and economic organization.

The quest for viable alternatives to the current global financial system was one of the main issues discussed at the Belém event. Gathering 130,000 social activists from more than 140 countries over six days at the gateway of the Amazon region, the forum also highlighted the environmental crisis and the voices of indigenous peoples.

Aiming at the heart of 'casino capitalism'

"Meaningful alternatives to current global finances need to fulfill two fundamental requisites," says Martin Gück, from Kairos Europe, a network of church-related justice movements. Gück was also a speaker at the WCC-sponsored panel in Belém.

"On the one hand, they have to reverse the imbalance of power in the current financial market system, which favors private and public actors—banks and international financial

institutions—that are neither legitimized democratically nor accountable to the society. On the other hand, the dominion of finances over the 'real' economy must end."

In other words, what needs to be targeted is the heart of so-called "casino, or gambling, capitalism." For each dollar involved in transactions within the 'real' economy—where products or services are exchanged in return for money—there are 35 dollars involved in transactions of a purely "virtual" nature through financial instruments ever more complicated and farther removed from real goods.

The other side of that coin, the so-called shareholder value principle, needs to be turned upside-down. Summarized in the dictum of Milton Friedman, one of the fathers of neoliberal economics, the principle maintains, "A company's only responsibility is to increase profits for its shareholders."

According to Gück, "It is no longer acceptable that only the interests of shareholders—and even those understood exclusively in terms of maximization of short-term profits—are taken into account when international companies make decisions."

Solutions to a systemic crisis

In Belém, some 20 civil society organizations and networks concerned with economic justice issues were able to agree on a number of concrete proposals to reform the current global financial system. Complex as the system is, the proposed alternatives are also varied and, sometimes, of a rather technical nature.

However, the basics are clear: "We call for the United Nations, reformed and democratized, to be put at the center of the reform of the financial system," says Marta Ruiz of the European Network on Debt and Development, who acted as spokesperson for the financial crisis caucus in Belém.

The list of key proposals includes mechanisms to control international capital flows, an international monetary system based on regional reserve currencies, citizens' control of banks and financial institutions, progressive taxation schemes both at national and international levels, prohibition of speculative funds and non-regulated markets, eradication of speculation on primary products including food, and elimination of tax havens.

The crisis is not just financial but systemic, the activists in Belém agreed, and it encompasses multiple crises affecting



Participants at the World Social Forum in Brazil take part in a rally.

Juan Michel / WCC

FOR EACH DOLLAR INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS WITHIN THE 'REAL' ECONOMY—WHERE PRODUCTS OR SERVICES ARE EXCHANGED IN RETURN FOR MONEY—THERE ARE 35 DOLLARS INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS OF A PURELY "VIRTUAL" NATURE THROUGH FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS **EVER MORE COMPLICATED AND FARTHER REMOVED FROM REAL GOODS.**

the environment, social and political structures, and food and energy supplies. Owing to this complexity, the solutions cannot be only of a financial nature.

"Behind the financial crisis is the ecological one," says Bertille Darragon, a French ecological activist. "We need to abandon the model of unlimited economic growth and start thinking in terms of 'de-growth'—that is, to decrease the consumption of resources and energy, beginning with the very rich but including the middle classes both in the North and the South."

"A change in our lifestyle is needed," agrees Wilfried Steen, a Protestant pastor who is executive director of the German Church Development Service (EED). "We Germans have a level of consumption that would require 1.3 planets to be sustainable. That needs to change. From a theological viewpoint every human being has a place in God's creation, so all have the same right to live and to consume."

An alternative development model needs to be "people-led, driven by local demand and based upon regional integration," says Percy Makombe, from the economic justice network of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa.

In Makombe's view, African countries should "de-link" themselves from the global financial and trade systems, rejecting bilateral and free trade agreements and even repudiating any further aid from developed countries.

"We rely heavily on foreign aid," says Makombe. "But as it is channeled through international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in order to receive that aid we are forced to open up our markets and put at risk our food sovereignty, and so the whole process ends up siphoning wealth out of Africa."

Reform within the system and reform of the system

Since it is clear that global finances cannot be overhauled overnight, a pressing question is how and where the changes will come from. The answer could be a two-way approach.

On the one hand it is necessary "to create at the local level new forms of 'solidarity economy' within the old system," Arruda says, "forms that are not driven by the logic of private profit and that are sustainable from an environmental and intergenerational perspective."

On the other hand, "We need to make sure that our alternative proposals become mainstream and are taken seriously," says Rogate Mshana, a Tanzanian economist working on the staff of the WCC.

Even if they do not believe the so-called "Group of 20" nations—the eight richest countries plus 12 of the largest emerging economies—can actually put in place a radical transformation, many of the activists gathered in Belém planned to press their agenda at a meeting of G20 leaders in early April.

According to Mshana, "Nobody has a blueprint for a new model of a global financial system. But as the current system is not the result of some blueprint but of an accumulative, step-by-step process along time, so we need to press for transformative reforms at different levels; civil society organizations and churches around the world have a lot to contribute in this regard." ❗

Juan Michel is media relations officer for the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Titus and Philemon: by James F. Myer Instruction and counsel

Paul's letters explain need for good character, forgiveness

Titus: The importance of good works

Titus is one of three of Paul's letters known as the "pastoral epistles," because they were written to church leaders concerning pastoral care of the members of local congregations.

Titus was one of Paul's converts (1:4) and became a reliable help to Paul's ministry. Crete was a large, mountainous island located in the Mediterranean Sea southeast of Greece. In New Testament times Roman armies used this rugged place for military training. The inhabitants of the island are described as being somewhat crude also, with a reputation described as "always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons" (1:12).

In this pagan environment Paul had left Titus behind to "put in order what remained to be done, and appoint elders in every town" (1:5). This verse provides the principle for calling multiple (and local) leaders as bi-vocational pastors for local churches, and this style of leadership is still a vital ministry pattern in numerous congregations in the Church of the Brethren. Even churches served by full-time pastors should seek to call ministers from within the congregation; a spiritually healthy congregation should be producing ministers. If the young fledgling church in Crete could do it, we should be able to do it as well.

The qualifications for elders are given in 1:6-9 and parallel those set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. To lead new church plants

in a corrupt environment required high-quality Christian living. It is interesting to note that no standard of academic training is listed, even though such standards seem to top the list of requirements today. Paul makes no apologies to ministers for raising the standard high in the areas of moral conduct and family relationships. The reason for this is because a minister is to lead by example, not merely by preaching from the pulpit.

The "husband of one wife" qualification (1:6) has been interpreted in various ways. A footnote in the *Brethren New Testament Commentary Series* on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus (p. 163), records an 1866 decision of Annual Conference: "Some of the early Brethren held the belief that a bishop (an elder) must be a married man. At the 1866 Annual Conference a question arose about 'the husband of one wife' clause. Does it mean 'that he must be a married man, or does it mean that he shall have but one wife at a time?' The answer, 'We consider that a single brother can hold the office of a bishop or deacon, if duly qualified in other respects, and that married brethren can hold either office being the husband of one wife at a time' " (p. 256, *Minutes of Annual Meetings of the Brethren 1778-1909*, Brethren Publishing House, 1909).

The rest of Titus chapter 1 emphasizes the destructive work of false teachers. Some false teachers are simply confused or have bad information. Others have evil, destructive motives and ambitions. The false teachers in Crete were religious

Judaizers who were insisting on observing all the feast days and rituals contained in the Jewish law.

In chapter 2 Paul gives instructions for older men and women, younger men and women, and servants. To each group a listing of duties and character qualities is given. The importance of sound doctrine, having a sober attitude, and taking one's faith seriously is upheld. These traits will give evidence to the work of God's grace in bringing us salvation (2:11), and this grace brings discipline, "training us to renounce impurity and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly" (2:12).

The final chapter gives instruction in being a good Christian citizen with a respectful attitude toward obeying government leaders. A key verse in Titus reminds readers of the importance of good works, "that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone" (3:8).

This letter closes with plans and greetings related to some of Paul's helpers, and then he extends grace to all readers. One answer to the question, "How can the church grow?" is found in Titus: If leaders and laity will respond to God's grace that enables lives to be changed (even in unlikely places like Crete), strong groups of disciples devoted to good works can emerge (3:14).

TITUS AND PHILEMON: A CLOSER LOOK

Titus: Titus is not mentioned in the book of Acts, but appears 13 times in the rest of the New Testament. He was a living object-lesson of one who was an uncircumcised Gentile that had received the gospel of the grace of God (Gal. 2:1-3). Titus was later sent on a mission to Dalmatia, and this is the last word recorded about him in the New Testament.

Philemon: Philemon may have been written about the same time as Paul wrote Colossians (about 60 AD). Philemon is one of the prison epistles along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philipppians, which implies they were written by Paul while he was in prison at Rome.



Philemon: Concerning a runaway slave

The book of Philemon is the shortest of Paul's letters; it focuses on encouraging Philemon to forgive and receive his runaway slave named Onesimus back into his good graces.

Onesimus had become a believer under Paul's influence while in prison. Apparently, before running off Onesimus had stolen from his owner, Philemon, and was now willing to return and make restitution. Under Roman law Philemon could have had Onesimus executed for his wrongdoing, but Paul urges forgiveness and restoration as a brother.

Paul is a prisoner (v. 1), likely in Rome, and addresses the letter to Philemon, and to "the church in your house." In New

Testament days those who were more wealthy and had larger houses opened up their homes as places for believers to meet; our family units today also should comprise little congregations, as we worship and teach God's word in our homes.

Beginning with verse 4, Paul expresses deep appreciation for the life of Philemon. In verse 8 he makes the case for forgiving Onesimus. Paul describes himself as an old man, and appeals on the basis of spiritual principles rather than on his authority as an apostle. He reminds Philemon of Philemon's own conversion under Paul (v. 19), and now Paul has become a spiritual father to Onesimus also (v. 10). Paul continued to nurture those who had come to faith in Christ under his ministry.

(It should be noted that Brethren have historically taught against owning slaves. Stories exist telling how some Brethren actually purchased slaves at slave auctions, then took them home and set them

free. Sometimes those slaves chose to stay around and become hired servants and work for their masters the rest of their lives, out of appreciation for the act of kindness.)

This letter to Philemon reinforces two important truths of the Christian faith.

One is the need for deep forgiveness to be practiced toward those who have wronged us, but who with sorrow have repented and been willing to make restitution. The Matthew 18 instruction has historically been taught to those seeking membership in the Church of the Brethren as a way of dealing with offenses that may come up.

The other is the doctrine of imputation. In verse 18 Paul says to Philemon, concerning Onesimus, "If he has wronged you

in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account." What a gesture of God's grace! We, too, have one—in Jesus—who by his death on the cross says to all sinners, "Put that on my account."

Paul concludes the letter by expressing full confidence that Philemon will follow through with this matter. He also sends Christian greetings to a short list of believers who likely comprised a part of Philemon's house church in Colossae. **AM**

James F. Myer is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and part of the free ministry team at White Oak Church of the Brethren, Manheim, Pa.

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

UNDER ROMAN LAW PHILEMON COULD HAVE HAD ONESIMUS EXECUTED FOR HIS WRONGDOING, BUT PAUL URGES FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION AS A BROTHER.

Mission and Ministry Board wrestles with tough decisions

Financial concerns topped the agenda at the March 14-16 meeting of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board. The denominational board—chaired by Eddie Edmonds, pastor of Moler Avenue Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, W.Va.—met at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., using Romans 12:2 as a scripture theme.

Revision of 2009 budget parameter

The board revised expectations for 2009 income to the Church of the Brethren's Core Ministries Fund downward by close to \$1 million. The revision was made in light of a loss of about \$7 million in net assets in 2008, caused by the market down-



Opportunities for "table talk" and brainstorming in small groups mark the spring meeting of the Mission and Ministry Board.

turn, as well as a 10-percent decrease in total giving to the denomination compared to 2007.

The new budget parameter represents an expected \$5,174,000 in income, reduced from \$6,036,000. Total expenses for core ministries in the revised budget come to \$5,671,000. With these revisions, the board approved a reduction of \$505,000 in the operating budget for core ministries, use of \$497,000 in net assets, and use of \$166,000 in designated funds to cover the deficit expected this year. A detailed plan for making the 2009 budget reduction of \$505,000 was presented in sessions that included only board members and executive staff.

Treasurer Judy Keyser told the board that finance staff anticipate a need for an additional budget reduction of close to \$300,000 in 2010; it assumes no salary and wage increases for 2010, as well.

"We have sufficient cash reserves. Our net assets are still strong," Keyser told the board's executive committee. The Church of the Brethren currently has a net asset value of about \$23 million (cash, investments, and property), down from some \$30 million at the close of 2007. She also noted that the Church of the Brethren has no outside debt obligations.

The budget decision affects the Core Ministries Fund of the denomination, but not self-funded ministries. A separate closed-session report was given by Brethren Press, which is operating in a deficit situation.

In comments outside of the meetings, general secretary Stan Noffsinger said the comprehensive plan would eliminate a num-

ber of employee positions, and also make substantial changes in how certain departments will do their work (see sidebars).

The financial situation "has forced the church to re-envision its ministries," Noffsinger said, emphasizing that leadership is attempting to use this difficult period to position the denomination to emerge from the economic downturn in good shape and with ministries appropriate to the current climate.

Board reorganization

The decision of the 2008 Annual Conference approving the merger of the Association of Brethren Caregivers with the General Board called for a combined board of 15 members plus a chair and chair-elect. Before the economic downturn, the board had planned to gradually reduce its number of members by attrition, with each member of the prior boards invited to fill out his or her full term.

The board, however, decided in New Windsor to immediately reorganize itself to help reduce expenses before Annual Conference this year. The decision reduced the number of board members from 29 to 19, and following Annual Conference it will be at the approved level of 17.

Those continuing on the Mission and Ministry Board include (last year of board term in parentheses): Eddie Edmonds, chair (2009), Dale Minnich, chair-elect (2011), Vernne Greiner (2010), Ken Wenger (2009), Terry Lewis (2012), Frances Townsend (2012), Dan McRoberts (2010), Willie Hisey Pierson (2013), Andy Hamilton (2013), Tammy Kiser (2011), Ben Barlow (2013), David Bollinger (2011), Hector Perez-Borges (2011), Wallace Cole (2013), Barbra Davis (2011), Chris Whitacre (2010), Colleen Michael (2011), Bruce Holderreed (2010), and John Katonah (2010).

Other business

In other actions, the board accepted the 2009 Annual Conference budget, approved the 2008 annual report of Church of the Brethren ministries, and approved spending of up to \$378,000 from a Land, Buildings, and Equipment Fund to pay for necessary upgrades to safety features and equipment in the kitchen at the New Windsor Conference Center.

The board also affirmed work by staff with regard to the Domestic Hunger Matching Grants program. Staff were empowered to find funding to match grants for 136 congregations that applied for the program after the money initially allocated from the Global Food Crisis Fund and the Emergency Disaster Fund had been fully expended.

In addition, the board recognized the work of Wil Nolen, who retired in 2008 as president of Brethren Benefit Trust; held a first read-through of revised bylaws for the denomination; did brainstorming for new core values and vision statements; reviewed a timeline for an update of the Ministerial Leadership Paper; and heard a preliminary proposal for a new Children's Ministry within the Caring Ministries.

Reports were received about a master plan for the Brethren Service Center and the General Offices, a new denomination-wide fundraising campaign in the planning stages, and several programs and recent conferences.

The executive committee approved an expenditure of \$47,000 from the Bequest Quasi-Endowment Fund for a test study of the new fundraising campaign, with consultants RSI of Dallas,

Texas. The appointment of Denise D. Kettering to the Brethren Historical Committee was affirmed by the executive committee.

The meetings closed with prayer, led by board member Chris Whitacre. The board prayed for those affected by the results of decisions made at the meeting, and for decision-makers to feel confident. "God . . . you have been with us in the deliberations of this process," Whitacre prayed, "every step of the way."

Congregational Life, Global Mission announce plans for reorganization

The Church of the Brethren is redesigning its Congregational Life Ministries area, eliminating the Congregational Life Teams effective April 6. The denomination also closed its Washington (D.C.) Office, as of March 19. The actions were part of a plan created by executive staff to respond to financial challenges facing the denomination and the decision of the Mission and Ministry Board to reduce the operating budget for core ministries by \$505,000 this year.

Congregational Life: The plan for Congregational Life Ministries outlines a new staff configuration with four director-level positions to be based at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The four positions are Intercultural Ministries, Transforming Practices, Spiritual Life and Discipleship, and Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

"Our relationship and service to congregations is not going to go away," said Jonathan Shively, executive director of Congregational Life Ministries. "It's going to look different, and feel different, but we still have a commitment to congregations."

The two new director-level positions will emphasize building capacity for leadership in local congregations and districts. Staff will shift from point-of-service ministries in geographic areas to ministries that build up congregational leadership and develop networks to exchange services and resources throughout the denomination, Shively said.

In addition, former Congregational Life Team member Ruben Deoleo will continue on staff as director of Intercultural Ministries responsible for equipping the denomination toward its intercultural vision and commitments. Chris Douglas continues as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, which provides leadership in understanding youth and young adult culture, trains the church for ministry with young people, and provides programmatic opportunities for youth and young adults.

Budget decisions force numerous staff layoffs

Following are Church of the Brethren staff members whose positions were eliminated following action taken by executive staff and the Mission and Ministry Board to address a significant budget deficit amid the current economic crisis. The 14 positions, along with two others eliminated in February, represent about a quarter of the organization's Core Ministries staff. Each person whose position has been

eliminated because of the budget reduction is receiving a three-month severance package of regular salary and benefits and outplacement services.

• **Amy Adkins**, program assistant at the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, finished her service on March 14. She had served in the part-time contract position since Sept. 15, 2008. Previously, she worked in the Brethren Witness/Washington Office for three separate periods of time: as program assistant from July through December 2005,

and May through November 2006; and as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker and legislative associate from August 2003 through February 2005.

• **Kim Bickler**, volunteer service ministries secretary, finished her service on March 24. Bickler was hired as secretary for Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) recruitment and orientation in May 1991. In 1992, her title changed to secretary of BVS recruitment, and more recently to volunteer service ministries

(continued on next page)



A time of prayer together closed the Mission and Ministry Board meeting.

Washington Office: Following the closing of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships, said he will be structuring a listening process to gather broad denominational feedback for reshaping the way the church carries out the work of witness, peacebuilding, and justice.

As the listening process takes shape, executive staff emphasized that the Church of the Brethren will continue its longstanding relationships with partners in peacemaking, continues to have representatives on the boards of ecumenical institutions to speak out and support the denomination's witness for peace and justice, will continue giving grants to peace partners such as Churches for Middle East Peace, and will continue providing opportunities and events such as the Christian Citizenship Seminar.

Some of the work responsibilities of the Washington Office now will be centered at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., including resources to be made available through the Global Mission Partnerships office, opportunities for political advocacy, and the work of the church to support conscientious objection.

secretary. In that role she connected with many of the hundreds of volunteers who have served through BVS in the past 17-plus years.

• **Doug Donohoo**, special gifts counselor in the Stewardship and Donor Development department, finished his service March 31. Donohoo has been serving in the funding and stewardship area since he started work as financial resource counselor for the Northeast on May 7, 2001. He came to work for the former General Board from Southern Ohio District, where he had served on the district board and New Church Development Task Force. He has worked out of a home office in Englewood, Ohio.

• **Mary Lou Garrison**, director of the Caring Ministries' Wellness Ministry, will finish her service on May 30. Garrison has worked part-time as director of the ministry since Aug. 1, 2006. The position was started as a collaboration between the former Association of Brethren Caregivers, the former Church of the Brethren General Board, and Brethren Benefit Trust. Prior to her appointment to the Wellness Ministry, she had worked as director of Human Resources for the General Board.

• **Jeff Glass**, Congregational Life Team member, finished his service April 6. He began serving in a half-time position as Congregational Life Team coordinator for Area 5 on Jan. 1, 1998. Based in San Diego, his work included an emphasis on the today's complex cultural shifts, and encouraging and supporting the emergent church movement among Brethren, with media ministry and digital communication as special interests.

• **Duane Grady**, Congregational Life Team member, finished his service April 6. He began as half-time Congregational Life Team coordinator for Area 2 on Jan. 1, 1998, and later also became coordinator for Area 4. For some years, he concurrently served part-time in pastoral ministry in Indiana. He has helped lead and shape the church's cross-cultural ministries emphasis and worked at nurturing healthy relationships between church leaders and congregations.

• **Steve Gregory**, Congregational Life Team member, finished his service

April 6. He began work part-time as Congregational Life Team staff for Area 5 on Jan. 1, 2000, concurrently serving part-time as district executive for Oregon and Washington District. Based in Wenatchee, Wash., he has worked at building relationships and developing leadership in the West and nurtured a strong interest in church planting.

• **Phil Jones**, director of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, finished his service March 19. Jones had been director of the office since July 21, 2003. His work there built on his involvement in grassroots efforts for peace and justice, including work against the death penalty and opposition to the war in Iraq. He helped organize many events such as the Christian Citizenship Seminar and annual gatherings of Brethren at the School of the Americas (SOA) Watch vigils.

• **Janice Glass King**, Congregational Life Team member, finished her service April 6. She began as Congregational Life Team coordinator for Area 1 on Dec. 1, 1997. Based in Pennsylvania, King worked to support congregations and districts in the areas of Christian nurture, Christian education, women's ministry, youth ministry, congregational consulting and resourcing, and leadership development, and served as liaison to the Association of the Arts in the Church of the Brethren (AACB).

• **Jon Kobel** finishes his service as manager of office operations for the general secretary June 19, after which he will assume new duties as conference assistant for the Conference Office of the Church of the Brethren (a self-funded program). For a time, Kobel will work alongside current conference assistant Dana Weaver as he learns the job. In September, the Conference Office will be moved to the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., from its current location at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Nancy Miner's position as manager in the office of the associate general secretary of Ministry and Program/executive director of Caring Ministries will be modified to provide managerial assistance to both the general secretary and the associate general secretary of Ministry and Program. Kobel has filled the managerial post in the general secretary's office since June 1999.

• **Carol E.O. Mason**, Congregational Life Team member, finished her service April 6. She began as Congregational Life Team coordinator for Area 3 on Dec. 5, 2005. Prior to her service with the Congregational Life Team, she also had served the Church of the Brethren as a mission worker in Nigeria. Based in Virginia, Mason has helped congregations improve various ministries and served on a group working with the "Gather 'Round" curriculum project.

• **Joan McGrath**, human resources coordinator at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., finished her service on March 26. She had served in the position for two years. Prior to her work for the church, she was the owner of Footsteps to Health in Westminster, Md.

• **Wolfgang Spreen**, program assistant for Buildings and Grounds at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., finished his service on March 9. Spreen began employment at the Brethren Service Center on July 14, 2003, as program assistant for the executive director of the center, and provided assistance to the general secretary. Later he became the program assistant for the Buildings and Grounds department.

• **Carol Yeazell**, Congregational Life Team member, finished her service April 6. Her service with the team started on Jan. 15, 1998, when she began a dual position as part-time Congregational Life Team staff for Area 3 and part-time district executive for Atlantic Southeast District. For seven months in 2005 she served as coordinator for Area 3, and from 2007-2008 was interim director of the Congregational Life Teams. Based in Arden, N.C., she has emphasized prayer and healing, organization and leadership, and aided the cross-cultural ministries of the denomination.

• In addition, two employees of Brethren Press—**Jean Clements** and **Margaret Drafall**—moved to part-time from full-time positions. Clements serves as Yearbook specialist. While reducing her time in Brethren Press, effective March 30, she is taking on a few hours a week for the Office of Ministry. Drafall is a customer service resource specialist. Her shift to part-time takes effect May 1.



Courtesy of BVS

BVS Unit 283: Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 283 held orientation Jan. 25-Feb. 13 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla. Volunteers had several days to serve the community, including work days with local agencies in Orlando and Miami. The group also explored issues of faith, community, peace, and social justice throughout their three weeks. Volunteers, with their home congregation or hometown and service placements are:

Front row: Beth Merrill (staff); Matthew Witkovsky, Stone Church of the Brethren, Huntingdon, Pa., to Brethren Witness/Washington (D.C.) Office and Youth/Young Adult Ministries, Elgin, Ill.; Sarah Hurst, Dillsburg, Pa. to Quaker Cottage, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Chelsea Spade, Grossnickle Church of the Brethren, Myersville, Md., to Casa de Esperanza de los Niños, Houston; Sharon Flaten (staff).
Middle row: Emily Fuentes, Erie, Colo., to The Palms of

Sebring (Fla.); Lauren Young, Harrisonburg (Va.) First Church of the Brethren, to Abode Services, Fremont, Calif.; Callie Surber (staff).

Back row: Heather Thompson, Billings, Mont., to Quaker Cottage, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Philipp Siedler, Rottweil, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Aaron Hostetler, Bremen, Ind., to Abode Services, Fremont, Calif.; Patrick Spahn, Neustadt, Germany, to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C.; Max Fuerstenberg, Gerlingen, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Dan Finkbiner, Little Swatara Church of the Brethren, Bethel, Pa., to Hopewell Inn, Mesopotamia, Ohio.

For more information about BVS, call 800-323-8039, or visit www.brethrenvolunteer-service.org.

Clergywomen's Retreat offers sabbath space and 'holy fire'

Pastors are usually the ones giving the blessings and preaching the sermons, but at the Clergywomen's Retreat in January, women ministers from across the denomination found time to listen and receive.

Forty-one women joined together for a week of sabbath rest at the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., Jan. 12-15. Structured around the theme of "Reconnecting with Holy Fire," the retreat featured daily sessions with author and theologian Marva Dawn exploring images of fire in scripture. A trip to a nearby beach included whale watching and cliff climbing; laughter yoga, art journaling, and prayer shawl-making activities filled another afternoon.

Each day ended in engaging worship, inviting women to create an altar, participate in communion, and remember their baptism. At the close of one worship service, the women

gathered in small circles to anoint one another, and the image was telling: all these ministers both blessing and being blessed.

"We expect and require much of our pastors, asking them again and again to anoint our bodies and bless our meals," said Dana Cassell, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker who helped to organize the event. "The Clergywomen's Retreat offered a short time of rest for these creative women who are spending their lives creating sabbath and offering blessing to others."



Mary Jo For-Stewart

Participants at the Clergywomen's Retreat prayed together in small groups and engaged in discussion and sharing of experiences. The event was sponsored by the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

May 1-2 Children's Disaster Services Level 1 workshop, Kerneysville, W.Va.

May 1-3 Church of the Brethren Women's Wellness Retreat, Lyons, Mich.

May 2 Deacon training event, Mount Morris, Ill.

May 3 National Youth Sunday

May 7 National Day of Prayer

May 16 Deacon training event, Palmyra, Pa.

May 17 Health Promotion Sunday

May 23-25 Church of the Brethren Young Adult Conference, Camp Swatara, Bethel, Pa.

May 27-29 Spiritual Directors Network retreat, Sharpsburg, Md.

May 29-30 Children's Disaster Services Level 1 workshop, Victor, N.Y.

May 30-June 4 Ministry Summer Service orientation, Elgin, Ill.

June 19-21 National Junior High Conference, Harrisonburg, Va.

June 24-26 Council of District Executives meeting, San Diego, Calif.

June 25-26 Ministers' Association continuing education event, San Diego, Calif.

June 26 Mission and Ministry Board meeting, San Diego, Calif.

June 26-30 Annual Conference, San Diego, Calif.

Become Your Legacy



"striving toward the hope to which you have been called..."
Ephesians 1:18

Becoming your legacy is a life-long process, one that begins as children and continues throughout our lives. Our beliefs and values, our thoughts and actions, contribute to who we are as people of God and guide us toward the hope to which God has called us. Like the transformation from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly, our lives are a process of becoming our legacy.

Wonderful resources to help individuals, families and congregations explore ways to identify, reclaim and communicate the sacred legacies people wish to bequeath to their loved ones and to future generations are available from Caring Ministries.

www.brethren.org/legacy
(800) 323-8039



Church of the Brethren

PERSONNEL MOVES

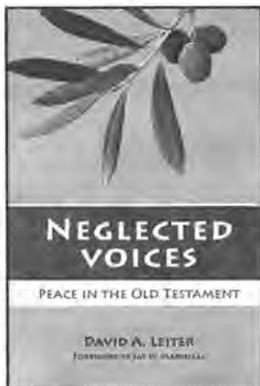
• **Steven Schweitzer**, assistant professor of Old Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., will become associate professor and academic dean at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., beginning July 1.

Schweitzer is a member of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind. He received his B.A. in Christian studies summa cum laude from North Central University, Minneapolis; an M.A. in theology with a concentration in Hebrew Bible and a minor in patristics from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn.; and a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Notre Dame. He previously taught at North Central University and at Notre Dame before joining the AMBS faculty in 2006.

"Steve brings a love for teaching, outstanding teaching evaluations, and highly developed organizational skills to this position," Bethany president Ruthann Knechel Johansen said. "I am pleased that he has accepted this call."

• **Zach Erbaugh**, director of seminary computing for Bethany Theological Seminary and the Earlham School of Religion (ESR), submitted his resignation effective April 17. He has accepted a position with a national software services company providing medical records tracking to hospitals and pharmacies. Erbaugh began his service with Bethany and ESR in October 2000.

• **Nate Polzin** was called to serve as interim district executive for Michigan District, a half-time position, beginning March 7. The district board and district conference have named a committee to review and evaluate the district mission and structure and bring recommendations to the 2010 district conference; Polzin will serve as interim until this process is completed. Polzin is a church planter and continues to serve as half-time pastor of The Church in Drive in Saginaw; he has also served on the district ministry commission and on Annual Conference Standing Committee and currently serves on the Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees. He is a graduate of Bethany and Central Michigan University. The district office is relocating to the Saginaw-Bay City area.



Neglected Voices Peace in the Old Testament

"David A. Leiter does not ignore the stories of violence found throughout the Old Testament. Rather, he seeks to strike a balance between those stories and stories that call for peace. He claims that peace is more than one theme among many; it is a key component that surfaces time and again."—*The Bible Today* Paper, 188 pages, \$16.99; in Canada \$19.54



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in Canada \$19.54



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ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

A group of 23 Bridgewater students spent spring break in March working with Habitat for Humanity in Bunnell, Fla. ... On Founder's Day, April 7, Bridgewater presented awards for excellence in teaching to Verne E. Leininger, associate professor of mathematics, and Philip T. Spickler, associate professor of physics.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

A new joint venture "pilot project" between Elizabethtown and the church's Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania districts is bringing together representatives from 11 local congregations and the college to discuss "Envisioning a New Church." A first meeting was held March 28.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Visaka Dharmadasa, a Sri Lankan peace activist and founder and chair of Servicemen Missing in Action and the Association of War-Affected Women, became the first Global Fellow at Juniata's Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies. Dharmadasa co-taught peace and conflict studies courses at the college March 15-27.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The work of La Verne seniors Chris Arce, Steven Bier, Amri Covarrubias, and Leah Heagy was included in the fourth annual Student Art Show presented by the Association of Independent California Colleges & Universities (AICCU). Their art joined works from other California schools in a display in California's State Capitol in Sacramento.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester announced an unprecedented \$11.67 million in four-year academic scholarships for 2009-2010, fueled by a record number of academically strong applicants. The scholarships, ranging from a total of \$50,000 to \$64,000, were awarded to 202 high school students. The school said it was on track to match last year's record enrollment.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

Seniors Katelyn Lamb of Hesston, Kan., and Erica Shook of McPherson, Kan., were honored as recipients of the Kansas Department of Education "Teacher of Promise" award after nominations from McPherson faculty members.



Kay Guyer

Roundtable participants engage in worship on the Bridgewater College campus.

Knights of the Roundtable

Spanning from Florida to Maryland, 270 youth and advisors gathered Mar. 20-22 at Bridgewater (Va.) College for Roundtable regional youth conference.

Attendees engaged with guest speaker Cindy Laprade Lattimer—a 2006 National Youth Conference co-coordinator—while exploring the theme "You Are a Knight in the Kingdom of God!" taken from Ephesians 6:10-11. Cindy explained how heroes of the church today are found in each of us, as we work with the Church of the Brethren to find paths of justice.

Shawn Flory Replogle also enticed youth to live the uniqueness of being Brethren in his first official address as Annual Conference moderator-elect. Bridgewater College band BBNJS led music throughout the weekend, with both youth and adults also enjoying a groovy evening performance by Brethren band Mutual Kumquat.

Participation in workshops, reflective small groups, and even ultimate frisbee was an integral part of the gathering. Youth skillfully took part in the variety show, worship, and vespers planned by the Interdistrict Youth Cabinet.

Next year's Roundtable is currently scheduled for Mar. 19-21, 2010.—**Kay Guyer**

Kay Guyer is a member of Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and of the 2009-2010 National Youth Cabinet.



Dawn Queenberry

Roundtable participant Tyler Broyles puts the armor of God—the theme scripture for this year's Roundtable—on full display.

BITS AND PIECES

- Eleven young adults are participating in the denomination's **Ministry Summer Service** (MSS) program this year. Training will take place in late May and early June in Elgin, Ill., before the interns head out to their ministry placements for nine weeks, each paired with a mentor. Seven will be serving in congregations; four are on the Youth Peace Travel Team visiting camps and conferences.
- As of the end of March, 703 participants had registered for one of this summer's 31 Church of the Brethren **youth and young adult workcamps**. Openings remain in some workcamps; registration continues through June 5 at www.brethrenworkcamps.org.
- A gathering called "**Footprints**" will replace the former Eastern Regional Youth Conference in the Northeast. The 2009 event is scheduled for Nov. 20-22 at Rhodes Grove Camp & Conference Center in Chambersburg, Pa. New Community Project director David Radcliff will be the keynote speaker.



'Slumdog Millionaire': An exotic look at fate vs. choice

When the 19th-century Brethren missionaries in their plain garb began their work in India it immediately became clear that they were in a different world. It was one thing to expect American Brethren to conform to the order, but India was a different matter. Give them credit: They adapted. This helps to explain the query to the 1902 Annual Meeting asking if it was acceptable to baptize polygamists in India.



FRANK RAMIREZ

One wonders if American Brethren confusion about the merger of the India Brethren into the Church of North India and the subsequent litigation about church buildings stems from a lack of understanding about the way that magnificent country works. India is the world's largest democracy, a nation of contrasts with abject poverty beyond anything we can imagine alongside opulent wealth.

There is a rigid caste system coupled with the possibility of upward mobility. Sectarian violence that rivals any hotspot in the world co-exists with a largely stable political system. And despite grinding injustice and corruption there is hope.

If *Slumdog Millionaire* does nothing else, it dramatically illustrates what the first Brethren in India discovered: This is one different place.

According to the data collected by Carl Bowman and published in *Portrait of a People*, most Brethren live in small towns or rural settings. I suspect we believe that. In some ways this is a strength, but I have observed that many Brethren I encounter think people either live the way we do or else they ought to. And it ain't necessarily so.

Of course by now just about everyone has heard about this film: the eight Academy Awards, the three sets of actors that portray the main characters as they age—some pulled right out of the slums portrayed on screen—and the controversies that swirled around the movie, including accusations that *Slumdog Millionaire* both exploited and insulted the Indian people.

Slumdog Millionaire takes place in a land wholly other than our own. It is a triumphant affirmation of the human spirit. More important, it wrestles with the question of whether we are the product of fate and chance, or whether our decisions make us who we are. Oddly enough, this is the same tension we encounter in the New Testament, where some scriptures

that suggest everything was preordained and some of us were chosen by God are balanced with others that make it clear that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and we make a choice to call on that name.

Maybe that's why I ended up loving this film, despite the fact that initially I was very skeptical. The characters are caught up in a web of social and religious constraints that determine their lives—except that their choices make success or failure possible.

Thanks to Danny Boyle's expert direction (he was assisted onsite by Loveleen Tandan), this complex story is easy to follow, despite the extensive use of flashbacks. We meet the film's hero, Jamal Malik, in the final stages of an episode of the game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* There are, of course, many versions in many countries. But we're simultaneously transported to a hideous jail where the contestant is being brutally questioned to discover where he, a survivor of the slums, could possibly have picked up the knowledge to answer the questions correctly. He is suspected of cheating.

Over the course of the film we discover how the experiences of a short lifetime in the slums provided all that he needed to know. Along the way a rich love story, as well as a tale of two brothers who have chosen radically different paths, is skillfully woven across a couple of decades.

The complaint is made that this is a fantasy, since almost no one will make it out of the slums of India. Ironically, this point was made very loudly through an angry diatribe in a major news magazine, written by a journalist who grew up in the worst of the Indian slums and who only through luck and a string of circumstances escaped to become a reporter for that periodical—which, despite his insistence that the whole thing is nearly impossible, demonstrated that it isn't.

Cast members, including children, teens, and young adults, are virtually unknown, but their performances are wonderfully strong. The direction, as well as the artistic concept, is staggeringly beautiful, even when filming horrific things. *Slumdog Millionaire* is nearly impossible to watch in places because the events are so terribly painful—yet it paradoxically glorifies the wonder that is India, where it was exclusively filmed. The movie should be seen by all who dismiss other countries for not doing a better job of being us. God's people live all around the world. **M**

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

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Slumdog Millionaire*. **Rating:** R. **Released:** November 2008 (full release, January 2009).

Running time: 120 minutes. **Directors:** Danny Boyle, Loveleen Tandan.

Notes: The movie was nominated for 10 Academy Awards this year and won eight, including Best Picture.

DVD: Went on sale March 31; list price \$29.98.



I AM CONCERNED OVER THE LONG SLIDE AWAY FROM ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH MATTERS OF **JUSTICE AND PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION** TOWARD A FOCUS ON SELF-CARE AND MISSION.

Recent cuts dampen our unique witness

When I came to the General Board in 1989 as peace consultant, I stepped into a vibrant cluster of staff and programs promoting the church's witness to justice, peace, and creation care. Altogether, there were nine offices working at these concerns: the Washington Office, Peace Consultant, Eco-justice, Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS), Africa/Middle East, Europe/Asia, Latin America, SERRV, and On Earth Peace (OEP).

As a result of spinning off programs (SERRV and OEP) combined with the reorganization of the national staff in the late 1990's, this was whittled down to three: Brethren Witness, the Washington Office, and BVS. Then

came 2003 and the melding of Brethren Witness and the Washington Office. And now as a result of the recent reductions by the Mission and Ministry Board (see page 21), only BVS remains—and it is less a program arm doing education and advocacy than an agency placing folks with other groups.

Thus, it is not just this recent cut that I find troubling—if not disabling—in regard to our peace witness. I am concerned over the long slide away from active engagement with matters of justice and peace and the integrity of creation toward a focus on self-care and mission (defined as church planting). We seem to believe these latter programs will somehow save our declining denomination, and when push comes to shove, they survive.

I would argue the reverse: For our denomination to recover its vitality, it is

precisely our cutting edge and biblically grounded witness to God's justice, peace, and care for this earth that could lead the way. Otherwise, we're not much more than another "Protestant" group competing for attention with other churches who play that game much better than we do. In addition, in the short time since the loss of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, I have heard from a number of youth and young adults who were deeply troubled by this decision, leading them to question the church's commitment to one of the tenets they consider essential to our witness and to their own connection to the denomination.

Perhaps the hope is that On Earth Peace will pick up the slack. They are very good at what they do, but they do not have a significant Washington pres-

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JOEL KUFFMAN@AOL.COM

ence and also lack the broad international and ecumenical contacts the denomination has nurtured over the years. These are the contacts that have informed our witness, while giving us wide recognition as a steady and creative voice for peace.

We like to say we are "continuing the work of Jesus" in our life as a denomination. Central to Jesus' work was a prophetic and courageous commitment to simplicity, love for enemies, and justice for those at the margins of society. It was the work of our Lord; it is work our world desperately needs to have done—will it continue to be our work?

David Radcliff
Elgin, Ill.

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Jesus' teachings don't leave room for rejection

Jesus taught us to love our neighbor and to love our enemies. He taught that when we care for the "least of these," we are caring for Jesus.

I do not understand how we as a church can reject people on the basis of a personal, God-given characteristic, namely homosexuality. This seems to be counter to everything Brethren. We are not following Jesus when we "shun" our churches and people who believe Jesus taught us to welcome and care for all. Jesus never taught us to judge others, but rather to work on the logs in our very own eyes.

I ask you to look into the eyes of a friend or neighbor who is gay or lesbian and see Jesus. If you do not know of someone who is gay or lesbian, seek out someone or ask a friend. The hope of the church is in going back to the words and life of Jesus as our inspiration, not the ways of the world or political positions. It seems way past time to acknowledge that there are differences within our church on this issue of welcoming all people and their gifts.

We need to move forward to do the work that we are called to do in this world. We all know there is so much to be done, so many people to serve, so much healing to take place. Let us stop focusing on rejecting others and be Christ's hands, eyes, ears, voice, and heart for our world.

Kathleen Fry-Miller
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Riemans' witness gave living letter to the world

The Sunday school class that we lead takes as its theme 2 Cor.3:2-3: "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; . . . written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God."

In our study of Brethren teaching and practices we have learned from many sources, one of which is MESSENGER. On the last Sunday of the month, we do a review of the current issue. All the members receive a subscription, a gift from the church. We encourage regular reading, and it is, as well, an informative source for people new to the church.

The March issue contained a lovely tribute of the Riemans pastors by one who read the "writing on the hearts" of these disciples. What an excellent and honest evaluation, one easily understood by those trying to make a difference in our world. We greatly appreciate Shawn's sharing and your bringing it to us. This witness continues, even after death.

David and Sara Wilson
Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Small churches can still do some creative things

One small church can make a difference. Members of Peace Church of the Brethren in Portland, Ore., with an average Sunday attendance of less than 50 people, have found some enormously creative and caring ways to serve their community.

- On the lower level (about half the total church space), the church has provided space for a day care center/shelter for homeless families.

- They are providing space behind the church for a community garden, which was dedicated on March 28 to serve the surrounding neighborhood, as well as the shelter.

- They provide office space for two staff members of On Earth Peace.

- Several members, headed by Ed Groff, create a monthly program for the local television station to highlight some aspect of the mission of the local church, as well as programs of the denomination. These DVDs are also sent to over 30 other churches and organizations throughout the country.

- Once a year on "Souper" Bowl Sunday, the group puts together soup packets for a local food bank. This year they made 1,267 (about 984 pounds). [See March MESSENGER, p. 3.]

- Members also find time to volunteer for other organizations and to attend local social action events, parades, and marches—frequently carrying the Peace Church banner.

I'm sure there are many congregations who serve in similar ways. This is what one small but active congregation is doing.

Linda Lauderdale
Portland, Ore.

Gender equality: Good steps taken, still room for more

As one who is also a feminist, I was very grateful for the article, "Can Justice Extend to Gender?," written by Wendy Matheny and published in the March issue. Thank you, good sister, for your comments and for your research that listed some of the "gender-equality efforts which already exist in our church community."

Caring Ministries Special Events

Annual Conference • June 26 – 30, 2009 • San Diego, California

Caring Ministries Recognition Dinner

Saturday, June 27, 2009, 5 p.m.

I'm not cheap, I'm Brethren!

Although the stereotype of Brethren folks is that they are earnest and serious, growing up Brethren can be fertile ground for comedy. Come hear about the lighter side of growing up with a father who is a biblical scholar and a mother who is a pastor. All of that in the great state of Texas and more.



The Caring Ministries Recognition Dinner will also honor recipients of the Caregiving Awards.

Tickets regularly sell out, so order your tickets early using the Meal Events order form in the Annual Conference packet or through Annual Conference's on-line registration site: www.brethren.org/ac.

Denominational Deacon Luncheon

Monday, June 29, 2009, Noon

Called to be "Fisherds"

Jesus clearly calls us to be fishers of men (and women). But is it enough to just cast our net? What do we do with our "catch"? Jesus reminds us in John 21 that each of us is called to share in a ministry of shepherding as well as fishing. How can deacons model this blended ministry in the life of the congregation?



Join us to talk about how we can create a climate that enables and encourages seekers to follow Jesus, while at the same time shepherding those who share in the life of the church.



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 PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19-July 2)
 ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24-July 5)
 EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
 ITALY, AUSTRIA & GERMANY (July 7-17)
 ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23-August 4)
 SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29-August 11)
 EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
 THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
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I want to add two such efforts to your list.

1. In the period from 1978 to 1987, when the special gifts of ministry had not been widely recognized, the district minister of Northern Indiana District succeeded in placing 15 different women in pastoral positions across the district.

2. In *Fresh from the Word*, the devotional book of the 300th anniversary of our church community, 104 of the 250 authors were women (All but one of the 104 were listed as being from the Church of the Brethren).

There is still room for improvement! Keep up the good work.

Charles M. Bieber
Lancaster, Pa.

The opinions expressed in "Letters" are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.

Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org. Please include hometown and phone number.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Beautiful America Tour to Annual Conference in San Diego. Ride with Brethren on air-conditioned coach from Elizabethtown, PA, with pickups along I-70. Visit Bethany Seminary and numerous national parks. June 18-July 5, 2009.

Europe in 2010. Enjoy two-week tour including Amsterdam, Paris, Swiss Alps, Oberammergau Passion Play, and Brethren sites—Buedingen and Schwarzenau. Three-week tour adds Venice, Vienna, Prague, Berlin. Please contact J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or kreiderk@etown.edu.

Walk where Jesus walked. Come along with Rev. John and Rev. Linda Stoner as they return to the Holy Land. The Stoners are both ordained CoB pastors with over 22 years experience as professional travel agents. This inspirational journey takes place November 3-12, 2009, and departs from Western Pennsylvania. Departures can also be arranged from any major gateway city. Transportation, first-class lodging, daily breakfast and dinner, and more included. \$3,389.00 877-456-8769 or www.smallgrouptours.com for details.

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Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Avenue, 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

Codorus, Dallastown, Pa.:

Debbie Fischl, Rick Fischl, Michelle Hartman, Eric Ritenour, Rhonda Ritenour, Dustin Innerst, Rachel Brenneman, Morgan Romesberg, Erika Sentz, Laura Leshner, Ian McKinnell

Elizabethtown, Pa.: Lynette

Campbell, George Keleher, Helen Keleher, Vera Neiss, Michelle Gray, Harry Ebersole, Jr., Heidi Ebersole

Fairview, Unionville, Iowa:

Gary Hanes

Freeburg, Paris, Ohio:

Andrew English, Conner English, Ted Troyer, Manases Troyer, Carol Troyer, Crystal Zellers, Robert Zigler, Meralyn Zigler

Greensburg, Pa.: James

Gettins, Sylvia Logan, Reid Maust, Christine Maust

Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.:

Deanna Duffy, Lydia Fisher, Morgan Rice, Carrie Ziegler

HIS Way, Mills River, N. C.:

Severiano Pizarro, Miguel Cervante, Rolando Ramirez, Angel Guananga, Oscar Otero, Veronica Guzman, Jesus Ramirez, Grecia Ramirez, Martha Mendieta, Rene Vega, Jennifer Trejo, Magaly Soto Suarez, Alberto Rafael Mendez, Leticia Portilla, Valentine Castellanos, Lourdes Ambrocio, Llaría Martinez Ivarra, Carlos Martinez Borrallas

Maple Grove, Norton, Kan.:

Shannon Douglas, Kyle Douglas

Milledgeville, Ill.: Jason

Brubaker, Hillary Grove, Gaye Page, Traci Page, Denver Baughman, Reid Phillips

Mohican, West Salem, Ohio:

Paul Ickes, Carole Ann Ickes, Bob LeMaster, Chris LeMaster, Jazon Garcia LeMaster, Shelly Odenkirk, Corey Odenkirk

Mount Hermon, Bassett,

Va.: Dawn Steele

Pleasant View, Fayetteville,

W.Va.: Ron Milam, Helen Milam, Shane Milam, Nora Milam

Union Bridge, Md.: Karen

Dargavel, Bryan Hissong, Kim Hissong, Bruce Hollenberg, Gary Mosholder, Sheri Mosholder, Cathleen Musil

Warrensburg, Mo.: Emerson

Taylor, Kari Taylor

Waterford, Calif.: Eric Parks,

Wanda Parks, Dennis Zurrino, Shannon Zurrino

White Cottage, Ohio: Fred

McNutt, Lynn McNutt, Willie Neighbor

Winter Park, Fla.: Rocco

Morelli, Christine Morelli, Dan Dunn, Margie Dunn, Tiffany Maupin, Jessie Davis, Kristi Davis, Stephanie Knight, Marie Henisa, Christine Bailiff

Woodbury, Pa.: Jennifer

Keyser, Randy Keyser

Anniversaries

Blackburn, Don and Clara,

Greensburg, Pa., 50

Davis, Carl, Sr. and Joan,

Greensburg, Pa., 50

Ghrist, Ray and Loraine,

Mammoth, Pa., 55

Layman, John and Marian,

Charlottesville, Va., 55

McKinnell, James and Letha,

Midlothian, Va., 50

Moon, Richard and Lois,

Youngstown, Pa., 55

Rounds, Ellis and Betty,

Alliance, Ohio, 60

Smith, A. Harrison and

Eleanor, Uniontown, Pa., 65

Thompson, Galen and

Connie, Zanesville, Ohio, 50

Wartluft, Donald and

Emogene, Alliance, Ohio, 60

Deaths

Andes, Connie S., 66,

Lawrence, Kan., March 2

Appl, Eva Lee Kindig, 89,

Stuarts Draft, Va., Jan. 5

Auker, Martha, 99,

Landisville, Pa., Feb. 22

Baer, Madlyn L., 86,

Hagerstown, Md., Feb. 16

Barr, Carol, 58, Ashland,

Ohio, Feb. 17

Berkenbosch, Dale, 87,

Prairie City, Iowa, Jan. 8

Brewer, Marjorie, 84, Prairie

City, Iowa, March 23, 2008

Brinegar, Freda, 81,

Centerville, Iowa, March 1

Brown, Mary, 93,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Jan. 21

Burger, Beulah, 89,

Centerville, Iowa, March 5

Crites, Norman D., 75,

Broadway, Va., Jan. 30

Curran, Harold, 81, Abilene,

Kan., Oct. 4

Dean, Margaret Seese, 88,

Oakland, Md., Jan. 29

Detwiler, Elda M., 96, New

Enterprise, Pa., March 5

Durbin, Leoda M., 90,

Hagerstown, Md., Feb. 14

Fager, Cecil, 91, Waterford,

Calif., Dec. 10

Feathers, Mary Ellen, 90,

Hollidaysburg, Pa., March 2

Ferg, Geneva, 89,

Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 6

Francis, Raymond, 91,

Roswell, N.M., Feb. 11

Fry, Fred, 71, Lititz, Pa.,

Feb. 11

Gelburd, Mildred H., 85,

New Market, Va., Feb. 28

Grossnickle, Essie B., 94,

Union Bridge, Md., Feb. 3

Hackathorn, Clifford, 80,

Prairie City, Iowa, Jan. 9

Hart, Maurice, 84, North

Huntingdon, Pa., Feb. 20

Hess, Anna, 88, Camp Hill,

Pa., March 2

Hile, Richard, 88,

Shippensburg, Pa., Feb. 17

Hoffer, Nora, 96,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 17

Hollinger, Robert B., 59,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Aug. 1

Holsopple, Donald K., 61,

Greensburg, Pa., Feb. 10

Holtry, Ross, 90,

Shippensburg, Pa., March 9

Hoover, Samuel Glenn, 89,

Plattsburg, Mo., March 1

Houston, Elsie, 76,

Greenwood, Del., Feb. 5

Kauffman, Rosita Rodriguez,

81, San Juan P.R., March 10

Keffer, Marian E., 92,

Zanesville, Ohio, Nov. 15

Keller, Margaret, 99,

Elizabethtown, Pa., Nov. 23

Kendall, Frank, 90,

Milledgeville, Ill., June 7, 2008

Lehman, Curtis, 83,

Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 22

Lingenfelter, C. Wesley, 75,

Altoona, Pa., Feb. 10

Long, Omer M., Sr., 87,

Hagerstown, Md., Jan. 12

Long, Vera, 76, Lititz, Pa.,

March 5

Manges, Harold B., 90,

Windber, Pa., Feb. 16

Michael, Mildred, 87,

Clinton, Iowa, Aug. 10

Myers, Galen, 89, Denver,

Colo., Feb. 27

Padgett, Darlene, 63,

Sheloceta, Pa., Jan. 29

Pentz, Elizabeth M., 77,

Westminster, Md., Feb. 10

Phillips, Marvin, 80,

Dayton, Ohio, March 3

Ream, Lucille, 91, Palmyra,

Pa., Feb. 16

Rivera, Beverly Ann, 64,

Lebanon, Pa., March 5

Rummell, Dorothy, 82,

Paris, Ohio, Dec. 16

Savage, Allan T., 79, Lititz,

Pa., Feb. 11

Seng, Chester, 90,

Milledgeville, Ill., March 27, 2008

Sherrick, Meda, 98, West

Salem, Ohio, Jan. 19

Smith, Gene, 77,

Milledgeville, Ill., Sept. 6

Snoeberger, Pauline, 97,

New Enterprise, Pa., Feb. 16

Steele, Hazel, 89, Woodbury,

Pa., Feb. 4

Troutman, Dennis J., 60,

Hopewell, Pa., Feb. 21

Van Horn, R. Maxine, 89,

New Enterprise, Pa., Feb. 18

Wampler, Arnold, 85,

Lebanon, Pa., Feb. 20

Wampler, Robert Eugene,

77, Falls Church, Va., Jan. 17

Weaver, Homer, 84, Tipp

City, Ohio, Feb. 27

Weber, Leora Firestone, 81,

Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 7

Weimer, Eva, 80, Modesto,

Calif., Oct. 15

Whitman, Alma, 84,

Middleburg, Fla., Feb. 16

Wilkinson, Mildred, 82,

Dayton, Va., Oct. 20

Williams, Rebecca F., 61,

Walkersville, Md., Oct. 19

Wingert, Helen, 88,

Chambersburg, Pa., Feb. 20

Witter, Doris, 76,

Chambersburg, Pa., Aug. 14

Wray, Violet, 94, Modesto,

Calif., Feb. 15

Wubbena, Doris J., 70,

Freeport, Ill., Feb. 10

Zimmerman, Jessie, 90,

Mount Morris, Ill., March 18

Zuercher, Debra, 53,

Elizabethtown, Ky., Dec. 28

Licensings

Koczan-Flory, Kimberly, N.

Ind. Dist. (Beacon

Heights, Fort Wayne,

Ind.), Dec. 21

Senkler, Christopher R., Pac.

S.W. Dist. (Pasadena,

Calif.), Feb. 1

Tindall, Josh, Atl. N.E. Dist.

(Elizabethtown, Pa.), Jan.

11

Ordinations

Carr, Jeffery W., Shen. Dist.

(Bridgewater, Va.), Feb. 1

Neff, John, Shen. Dist.

(Grottoes, Va.), Sept. 2

Wilges, Shawn A., S. Ohio

Dist. (Gratis, Ohio), Jan.

4

Pastoral Placements

Gordon, Michael Wade, pas-

tor, Midway,

Surgoinsville, Tenn., Feb.

4

Graeber, Phillip John, pas-

tor, Erwin, Tenn., Feb. 8

Hinton, William Jefferson,

Sr., pastor, Bethlehem,

Boones Mill, Va., Feb. 1

Kelly, John Stuart, from

interim to pastor, Trinity,

Troutville, Va., Feb. 1

Mishler, Cheryl Jean, associ-

ate pastor, Topeka, Kan.,

Feb. 15

Shockey, Howard D., pastor,

Girard, Ill., Feb. 15

Weaver, R. Edward, from

interim to pastor, Three

Springs, Blain, Pa., Jan. 4

For the birds

As I write this, a robin is banging into my office window two or three times each minute.

He leaves his perch on a nearby tree, makes a run at various parts of the window, bounces off, and returns to the tree. After a brief break to clear his head (Do robins see “birdies” flying around when they’re dazed?), the persistent little fellow tries again.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

He’s had no hint of success for hours now, yet he tries the same thing repeatedly. If he keeps it up much longer, I’ll begin to suspect that he’s Brethren.

The recent cutbacks occurring for our denomination and all the concern they have sparked are reminders that the ways we have been trying to do things for some time now are obsolete. We continue to rely on the structures we’ve known, because we do know them and because they have mostly

served us well in their time. But the world is quickly changing.

The immediacy of this current economic crisis should pass in time as the stock market and other financial systems stabilize. The larger trends, however, and the cracks in our national way of life that this crisis has exposed are going to be with us for the long-term.

Those trends are compounded when thrust on a church structure already in decline. Institutional church as we have

WHATEVER THE ANSWERS, SOME CREATIVE THINKING IS NEEDED. TODAY’S LANDSCAPE CALLS FOR RADICAL RE-IMAGINING AND RE-VISIONING. THAT SHOULD COME NATURALLY TO A MOVEMENT THAT AROSE FROM THE WAVES OF THE RADICAL REFORMATION.

known it is likely unsustainable. It has a marvelous legacy and continues to do some good things. It is, however, a Model-T Ford in a world of spaceships. It’s not just a Brethren problem, of course; every long-running, “mainline” denomination is confronting similar realities.

The response, as each wave hits, has been to whittle away programs and staff. To be fair, many of the decision-makers have little choice as options fade. But one accompanying risk is that we whittle down to toothpicks that can’t function with any impact. Another is that congregations and members who value those programs will cut back on giving, adding to the spiral. Like Shel Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree*,

we may find ourselves with only a stump remaining.

As hundreds of thousands of dollars are being shed by releasing denominational staff, the denomination is considering how to raise millions to care for two large properties and their buildings. Many districts and congregations are weighed down by the same property-driven discussions. Is it time to rethink the proverbial “edifice complex”—our building-centric approach to doing church?

There may be other ways we can do things more efficiently. A *USA Today* story said some children are moving back in with their parents—or vice-versa—to save money as jobs vanish. Could congregations near each other share space to save money and magnify their witness? Could our denomination partner with other like-minded ones to accomplish some of the ministries we feel are essential to the work of Christ? Or perhaps the church needs to evolve into a more horizontal, grass-roots model where every member takes greater responsibility for its ministry and witness.

Whatever the answers, some creative thinking is needed. Today’s landscape calls for radical re-imagining and re-visioning. That should come naturally to a movement that arose from the waves of the Radical Reformation. It seems, however, that as other groups move toward the new center that Anabaptism and especially Pietism once occupied, Brethren may be drifting outward.

Perhaps a more apt metaphor for our current situation comes from the first of the *Harry Potter* films. For those who follow them, you may recall young Harry standing before the Mirror of Erised in a dusty corner of his school. Orphaned when he was a baby, Harry looks into the mirror and sees himself flanked by his parents, their arms around him and faces beaming with pride. He returns again and again.

The school’s headmaster explains that the mirror “shows

us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts,” and warns that some have wasted away, just gazing into the mirror with obsessive longing.

We, too, may long for things to be different; or rather, we long for them to be the same again. We want a return to the comfortable days when everyone went to church on Sunday mornings and our structures hummed easily. We wish for the relevance we once knew.

It’s been quiet at the window for several minutes now. Perhaps the robin has given up his headache-inducing endeavor and found a new way. May we find the grace and courage to do the same.—Ed. 

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