

Church of the Brethren

# MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2009 [WWW.BRETHREN.ORG](http://WWW.BRETHREN.ORG)



## TALK of the TOWN

*Annual Conference 2009 focuses on dialogue*

**The New Community Project—offering resources that challenge us, experiences that change us, and a community that gives us hope. Join us!**

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**Go Ahead!  
Turn it  
Upside  
down!**

Tom Benevento leads NCP's Sustainable Living Homestead in Harrisonburg, VA promotes locally-grown organic food (ever seen a chicken tractor!?), community gardens and bicycling

The average food item is grown with polluting chemicals and travels 1500 miles to our table (not by magic carpet, but by carbon-emitting transport)

NCP markets Fair Trade products from women's groups in Uganda and Guatemala and makes grants for skills training and adult literacy in Burma, Sudan and Nepal, giving women the opportunities they deserve for a decent life

Women make up 80 percent of the world's sweatshop workers—long hours, low pay, often abused

NCP provides scholarships for girls' education in Africa, Asia and Central America, offering young women a better chance for a better life

Only 1 in 5 girls in poor areas of the world complete primary school—this means earlier marriage, more children, greater chance of getting AIDS, less chance of having the life God intends

NCP offers young people special mailings; school, college and youth group presentations led by David Radcliff; the Solidarity Worker program; and Learning Tours!

Youth and young adults in the USA are looking for something deeper than what our materialistic and self-absorbed society has to offer

NCP is working with its partner in the Ecuadorian Amazon to purchase and preserve 137 acres of amazingly diverse but directly endangered rainforest

The Amazon Rainforest is disappearing at a rate of 5000 square miles a year—it could be gone this century

NCP sponsors Learning Tours to Africa, Asia, the Arctic, the Amazon, Central America to learn about our world, to build relationships with our neighbors, and to seek change in ourselves

We are connected to our world by the clothes we wear, the wars we fight, the climate we share—yet vast differences remain

NCP's Undoing Global Warming workshops, forest preservation programs, and web and print resources combat climate change

Polar ice caps along with mountain glaciers around the world are melting at an alarming rate, threatening humankind and God's creation

NCP supports reforestation efforts in Guatemala and Sudan—"I am preaching the gospel of trees," says NCP partner Paskwale Ben of Nimule, Sudan

According to the United Nations, deforestation in Sudan is a main cause of conflict and a contributor to global warming; there as elsewhere, healthy forests ensure a vibrant ecosystem and reduce conflict over scarce resources



**New Community Project**

"...turning the world upside down..." Acts 17:6

**Go Ahead!  
Turn it  
Upside  
down!**

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

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

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



## ONTHECOVER

Just over 2,000 people attended this year's Conference in sunny San Diego for a small but intimate gathering amid the palm trees, roses, and fountains of the Town & Country Resort. The pleasant atmosphere opened the doors for conversation and dialogue, something that delegates called for more of in a formal way. *Cover photo by Glenn Riegel.*

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**Editor's note:** In order to exercise the best possible stewardship of our resources as postage, printing, and other costs continue to climb, MESSENGER will shift to 10 issues per year beginning in 2010. Subscribers will receive a combined issue in January/February and July/August. This will enable us to keep subscriptions at current rates; all annual subscriptions will continue as scheduled. If you have questions, please call 800-323-8039 or e-mail [dstroyeck\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:dstroyeck_gb@brethren.org).

- 8 **Annual Conference 2009: Let's talk about it**  
Brethren gathered in San Diego with some controversial items on the business agenda, but while speeches were passionate, the tone was generally civil. Decisions by delegates put the denomination on a course to intentionally talk about some of the differences that divide us. Coverage includes a look at business (p. 8), highlights of meal events and other special features (p. 12), a look at the youth's immigration-focused trip to the Mexican border (p. 14), and worship highlights (p. 15).
- 16 **Transformation, middle-school style**  
The National Junior High Conference brought together about 600 middle schoolers and advisors on the campus of James Madison University in Virginia. Through a variety of speakers, musicians, and workshops, they explored what it means to be changed from the inside out.
- 18 **Calling: A lifetime of listening**  
Ben Green says hearing and understanding our call from God is not normally from somewhere "out there"; instead, it requires listening honestly "to that which is within."
- 20 **1 & 2 Peter: Letters of encouragement**  
These two short epistles attributed to the apostle Peter carry words of exhortation for the early church. One says to have heart in the face of suffering; the other warns against false teaching.

**A**n audience at the Brethren Press Breakfast at Annual Conference was inspired by the story of Marie Hamilton, as told by author Melanie Snyder. But they didn't realize the story was also about them—or all of us, actually.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

The bonus message showed up quietly in the form of a letter given to Melanie as she headed to San Diego to deliver her speech. The letter was written by Jerry Mason, a longtime prisoner at Rockview State Correctional Institution in Bellefonte, Pa. He was eager to write about his friend Marie, a seemingly ordinary person who made an extraordinary impact over the course of 30 years of volunteering within the Pennsylvania prison system. Her story is the subject of *Grace Goes to Prison*, a book due out next month. Jerry wanted to thank the Church of the Brethren for helping shape her to be the person she is. There wasn't a way to distribute the letter at Annual Conference, but

here is part of what Jerry had to say to the Brethren:

Marie's ministry of a loving Savior was undeniable in her motives and her actions. It was obvious her motives and beliefs weren't simply a result of believing in Jesus, but were a way of living that was instilled in her as a result of being raised in the Church of the Brethren.

With each year of living in prison comes despair, hopelessness, helplessness, and loneliness. The distance of separation from family and friend grows with no end in sight.

But through Marie's love of God, her fellow man, and community, she found a way to bridge the gap of separation. Her programs gave men hope; and through her activities and interaction between the incarcerated and community, men found a purpose. But most important of all, men saw Jesus living in Marie and that influenced them to walk a closer walk with God through prayer and serving others.

When I first came to prison I met a man in prison for murder. He received word that another man was attempting to steal his wife. He sent a message to the man, "I may be in prison, but you'll be amazed how far my arm can reach."

That leaves me with the conclusion of this letter. Church of the Brethren: We may be in prison and out of the sight of society, but it sure is amazing how far your arm of love has reached.

Is Jerry right? Can everyone in the Church of the Brethren take some credit for the grace that has gone to prison through one of our own? While we ponder all the implications of that question, let us celebrate how far God's love can reach when we are willing to extend our arms.

*Wendy McFadden*

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## Sell it again!

### Young girl's gift raises \$3,400 at auction

On the auction stage at the Shenandoah District Disaster Relief Auction in Harrisonburg, Va., a slender and petite 9-year-old girl with a plain blue apron held a frying pan. In that frying pan was the national award-winning corn bread concoction prepared and baked from scratch.

The auctioneer and the audience were inspired by this young girl's gift to the auction. After at least six calls to "sell it again," the final cost of the corn bread totaled \$3,400, bought by Garland Beam of Mill Creek Church of the Brethren.

The young girl, Brynn Kiser, is the daughter of Greg and Tammy Kiser of Dayton, Va., and a fourth-grader at Ottobine Elementary School. Brynn, who attends Briery Branch Church of the Brethren, entered her prize-winning recipe in competition with 800 other aspiring 4-H cooks in a national competition in Tennessee. She survived the rigorous scrutiny of the judges and was chosen one of the top 10 for the final competition.

Each finalist had one hour to prepare the meal. She titled her winning recipe, "A Berry Corny Coffee Cake." The recipe featured a lemon-based butter, a filling of blueberries and cream cheese, and streusel topping with icing. Brynn's cake, grilled on a 10-inch skillet, contained corn meal, an ingredient required in the national contest. The contest was sponsored by Martha White Corn Meal and Lodge Cast Iron Skillets.

Desiring to help others and share her accomplishment, she begged her mother to bake one just for the auction, held May 16. The auctioneers caucused together, realizing this national prize deserved special treatment, and decided to auction it separately.

When the corn bread finally found a home, the auction crowd applauded enthusiastically with tears in their eyes as Brynn Kiser stood stunned, not realizing what a big statement she had made through her corn bread baking. It took a while for her to understand that she did as Jesus taught: "In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me"—\$3,400 worth!—Earl K. Ziegler

**NOTE:** The biggest of the Brethren auctions, the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction in Lebanon, Pa., takes place this month: Sept 25-26 at the Lebanon Area Fairgrounds.

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo, if possible, are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.



Courtesy of Earl K. Ziegler

*Brynn Kiser received a national blue ribbon for her unique cornbread dessert recipe.*

**Northeast** Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren was among the sponsors and organizers of the Frederick AIDS Awareness 5K Walk held on June 27. The walk began at the church, which has an HIV/AIDS ministry.... Tony Campolo will speak at the Brethren Housing Association's 20th anniversary celebration banquet Sept. 15 in Harrisburg, Pa.... Camp Harmony (Hooversville, Pa.) holds its Brethren Heritage Festival on Sept. 19.

**Southeast** Shenandoah District board members are planning to visit at least half of the district's 102 congregations in teams of two this year.... The Lake Side new church start in Virlina District broke ground at their new site near Moneta, Va., May 30.... Frederick (Md.) pastor Paul Munday spoke at this year's Awakening Services for the Roanoke, Va.-area congregations on the theme "Totally Transformed." The four services had an average attendance of almost 200.

**Midwest** Illinois/Wisconsin District is exploring a new church start led by several families in southeastern Wisconsin.... The annual Camp Mack Festival (Milford, Ind.) takes place Oct. 3, featuring a live and silent auction.... A quartet from Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren sang the national anthem before a Peoria Chiefs baseball game this summer.... Southern Ohio's ice cream social fundraiser for disaster ministries was held Aug. 15 at Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Clayton.

**Ozarks/Plains** David Shumate, moderator of the 2009 Annual Conference, will be the guest leader and preacher for the annual renewal weekend Feb. 27-March 1, 2010, at Fairview Church of the Brethren in Northern Plains District.... Northern Plains held a district auction on Aug. 1 to raise funds for district ministries.... McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren's "Seeds for Hope" project and other efforts have raised over \$7,700 for New Community Project work in Sudan.

**West** The Sunnyslope and Wenatchee (Wash.) congregations have begun a Foods Resource Bank growing project this year, with wheat and orchard produce.... Idaho's Camp Wilbur Stover held its intergenerational program for the district July 12-18 this year; the camp also hosted a denominational workcamp in June.... Arizona Brethren again hosted a summer Crawdad Camp July 20-25 in the West Clear Creek Wilderness.



## YOU SAID IT

**"How often do we as Christians hesitate because we want God to put everything in place first, so we don't take that first step?"**

—Mary Mueller, co-consultant/coordinator for Brethren Disaster Ministries work in St. Bernard Parish, La., speaking about her call to that ministry

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 80

Number of churches and organizations that had registered to be part of this year's International Day of Prayer for Peace observances and vigils (on Sept. 21) as of late July, according to On Earth Peace.



Tim Witte discusses making good choices with Ethan, Hannah, Bradley, Courtney, and Jordan. The parable of the 10 bridesmaids was part of Agape Church of the Brethren's 2009 VBS focus on Matthew 25.

### Fort Wayne VBS focuses on reaching out to others

Agape Church of the Brethren (Fort Wayne, Ind.) broke from a traditional Vacation Bible School (VBS) format to focus on the message of Matthew 25 on two consecutive Monday-Tuesday

nights in June.

Children and adults enjoyed singing, crafts, games, and discussions while learning about making good choices, using our talents to serve, and helping others. Representatives from Neighborhood Health Clinic, the Red Cross, Rescue Ministries, Bridges out of

Poverty, Associated Churches Food Banks, and Habitat for Humanity shared how their organizations work with volunteers to help in the community.

A challenge was given to turn \$1, \$2, or \$5 into more money through the use of our "talents." Offerings along with the "Talent Project" gave \$578.10, which was divided between the Rescue Ministries and Red Cross. Over 300 pounds of non-perishable food was collected for the Associated Churches Food Bank, and a truckload of clothing was brought in for the Rescue Mission and Charis House.

The 85 people attending this year's VBS truly learned about serving in our community, along with having a fun time sharing together and singing the "kid songs," including the theme song, "This Little Light of Mine." Our goal was to reach out to the community and learn more about serving those around us who need help. We hope Agape's "light" shines a little brighter and continues to spread through the area in the coming year.—Becky Morris

## REMEMBERED

• **Ellen Edmister Cunningham** of Fresno, Calif., a former Church of the Brethren missionary in China and India, died April 23 at age 102. She and her late husband, E. Lloyd Cunningham, responded to a call for missionaries to go to China in 1938. After unrest developed in China they were in the Philippines for language study when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. Along with more than 400 other civilians they and their young son, Larry, were in a Japanese internment camp from 1941 to 1945. The story of the internment experience has been published in *Brethren Life and Thought*. Coming home after liberation in 1945, the Cunninghams returned to China in 1947 only to be forced out by the communists in 1949. While in Hong Kong, awaiting passage home, they received word that the mission field in India needed a doctor, so the family, now with two children, went on to India to work for the church's mission there.

• **Sheri Layman Fecher**, 53, passed away July 11 at her home in Elgin, Ill., after a long battle with cancer. She was employed by the Church of the Brethren General Board in 1996 and 1997 as Yearbook assistant. She is survived by her husband of 31 years, Donald Fecher, a former director of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes; daughter Cyndi Fecher, managing editor for the *Gather 'Round* curriculum; and son Leland Fecher. A teacher for 12 years, she was an active member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin. A memorial service was held July 25 at the church.

• **James K. Garber**, 83, a former member of the executive staff of the Church of the Brethren General Board, died June 9 at Timbercrest Healthcare in North Manchester, Ind. From 1983 to 1986 he served as executive for the General Board's Human Resources department. He also worked at Manchester College for a total of 30

years, beginning as director of Alumni Affairs in 1962, then as director of Public Relations and Development through 1984, and again as director of Development from 1987 to retirement in 1994. He also served on the board of directors of Timbercrest. He was a 1950 graduate of Manchester College, and in 1962 earned a master of business administration from Indiana University in Bloomington. Garber was a conscientious objector and participated in Civilian Public Service during World War II. A memorial service was held at Manchester Church of the Brethren on June 13.

• **Tom Mullen**, 74, passed away June 19. He had taught at Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Ind., including courses for students at Bethany Theological Seminary following its move to Richmond. Known to Brethren as a popular humorist who has spoken at National Older Adult Conferences and Caring Ministries Assemblies, he was the author of a number of books including *Laughing Out Loud and Other Religious Experiences*. He is survived by his wife, Nancy Faus Mullen, who is a former professor at Bethany. A funeral was held June 27 at West Richmond Friends meeting house, and a celebration of his life took place Aug. 2 at Richmond Church of the Brethren.

• **Jay M. Witman**, 56, a Pennsylvania auctioneer who helped begin two Church of the Brethren disaster relief auctions, died at his home in Manheim, Pa., on June 7. He co-founded the Disaster Relief Auction in Atlantic Northeast District in 1977, and assisted in establishing a similar auction in Shenandoah District in 1994. He started his career as an auctioneer in 1971. His volunteer work also included service with the Mennonite Central Committee Disaster Relief Auction in Harrisburg, Pa., and at the Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School. He was a member of White Oak Church of the Brethren in Manheim, and was instrumental in organizing the Manheim Area Prayer Breakfast. A funeral was held June 14.

## Lancaster-area youth featured for following their passions

Two Church of the Brethren youth were recently featured in the Lancaster (Pa.) *Intelligencer Journal/New Era* newspapers.

An article on Harrison (Harry) Rhodes, a member of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, described the environmentally conscious lifestyle he has adopted since hearing New Community Project director David Radcliff speak at a church conference. Rhodes has since traveled with Radcliff on two learning tours to Alaska and Honduras and made changes in his own lifestyle, including riding his bike to school and eating vegetarian. "It was really eye-opening," Rhodes said of the trips. "You try to live more consciously and understand why people are living in these situations."

Rhodes served as an intern at an organic farm this summer. He is headed to Green Mountain College in Vermont this fall to major in environmental studies with a focus on agriculture.

Zachary Felpel, meanwhile, was featured for his success in competitive bicycling. A member of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren in Quarryville, Pa., he rides with an area elite amateur team, Team Alliance Environmental of West Chester.

"I just sort of love the freedom I get, just riding on the open road," Felpel told the newspaper. "I like exploring different roads, different places."

He has ridden in numerous regional races, trained and raced in Belgium after being selected by USA Cycling, attended an assortment of camps, and was state champion for the age 17-18 short-circuit "criterium" course. Felpel hopes to eventually be a pro cyclist and ride in Europe.

This fall he will attend Lees-McRae College in North Carolina, where he will be on the cycling team and major in athletic training.



**Carnival fun:** A recent Kids' Karnival at Ashland (Ohio) First Church of the Brethren included games, balloons, clowns, music, a petting zoo, and a free lunch on the church lawn. Above, a visitor takes advantage of the face painting offered.

*Blessed are the pure in heart . . .  
they will see God.*

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## LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Jan West Schrock**, daughter of Heifer International founder Dan West, announced her retirement from Heifer effective June 26. She had been serving as a consultant to the organization.

• **Jeannine Leonard**, an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren from Minnesota who serves in chaplaincy, presided over a wedding that has become a YouTube sensation, according to *The Lutheran* magazine. A couple who was married at Christ Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., have become celebrities thanks to a video of their dance down the aisle, which was posted on YouTube. The wedding of Jill Peterson and Kevin Heinz took place June 20; by July 24 there were more than 1.5 million views of the dance. *The Lutheran* reported that the wedding party was scheduled to do an encore dance for the Today Show.

# Peacefully. Simply. Multiculturally.

**When the 2008 Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration was held in Illinois/Wisconsin**

District we held our morning and afternoon sessions at the Church of the Brethren Offices in Elgin, Ill., and visited three different Church of the Brethren congregations on consecutive evenings: Highland Avenue, Chicago First, and Naperville.



RUBÉN DEOLEO

During our 2009 consultation we visited the Eglise Des Frères Haitiens and Miami First Church of the Brethren, both in Miami, Fla.

Over the past 11 years of Cross-Cultural Consultations we have visited more than a dozen congregations, Bethany Theological Seminary, the

New Windsor Conference Center, and Camp Bethel. We are planning to be at Camp Harmony April 22-25, 2010.

In that time, we have noticed that each one of those places, and God's people there, have very unique and particular characteristics that make each one preciously a part of

"Together" in our diversity of ethics, cultures, and ages.

So maybe "Together" means multiculturalism all the time? Does "Together" mean inclusion, love, understanding, equality, respect, harmony, unity? Psalm 133 says to each one of us, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! . . . For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."

For 11 years many have been seeking "Together" as something deeper than just simply being together. "Together" is the reason why we are blessed by the Lord, and each one of us is an important element, a link in the chain, in keeping unity during this time of diversity. The Cross-Cultural Consultation has been and is the place where we celebrate the blessing of being "One body, one spirit, and one hope" in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4:4)

Cross-Cultural Ministries works at helping each member, congregation, and district to develop a sense of belonging to each other as a member of the body of Christ and his church, and to work at adding members instead of resisting it. The reason why we keeping losing members is because we are not committed to continue the multicultural work of Jesus,

**"TOGETHER" IS THE REASON WHY WE ARE BLESSED BY THE LORD, AND EACH ONE OF US IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT, A LINK IN THE CHAIN . . . THE CROSS-CULTURAL CONSULTATION HAS BEEN AND IS THE PLACE WHERE WE CELEBRATE THE BLESSING OF BEING "ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, AND ONE HOPE" IN JESUS CHRIST. (EPH. 4:4)**

one body. They have prepared meals in accordance with the cultural tradition of the hosting church, each one providing a delicious spread for the special group of people who participate in this annual experience. They have also hosted worship services, opened their homes to accommodate participants, taken time for fellowship, and provided a welcoming atmosphere for the event. Churches members are enthusiastic as they receive the brothers and sisters from other places and cultures in multicultural hospitality.

At the 2008 celebration, during the closing prayer for the last evening's service, pastor Dennis Webb said these words: "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Multiculturally." I approached him and said, "Do you know what you have done?" He said, "What have I done, my brother?" "You have changed the meaning of one of the most known and accepted expressions in the Church of the Brethren," I said. Immediately I added, "Can I use it?" "Yes, you can," he said. I understand that many people and congregations have been part of the creation of this identity line, but the time is right to listen and obey God's calling us to be

clearly expressed in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In the work that Jesus has commanded us there is no exclusion.

"Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Multiculturally" will call us to live into a continuous cross-cultural event in each one of our churches. Each one of us will be challenged to reflect with our conduct the image of Jesus and to live that out together.

In October 2000 the Cross-Cultural Ministry Steering Committee wrote this mission statement: "We are called to enrich and strengthen the Church of the Brethren by our unity as people of color, modeling for the larger church the blessings of being one as God's people." Many have been living by this statement for many years; the time has arrived for you to come along.

"Together" we can learn to live a life in unity as we prepare for a life in eternity. 

Rubén Deoleo is director of Intercultural Ministry in the Congregational Life Ministries office of the Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill.

QUOTE WORTHY

“There is really no situation that is intractable—none.”

—Nobel peace laureate and retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in a speech at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. Tutu was addressing the possibilities for peace between Israel and the Palestinian regions, comparing it to the seemingly impossible end to apartheid in South Africa. (WCC News)

“As much as religion can be used to fan the flames of conflict, it can also extinguish the flames of conflict.”

—Rabbi Daniel Rossing, executive director of the Jerusalem Center for Jewish Christian Relations (WCC News Service)

“However much we try to teach our children, they are more influenced by how we ourselves are living. . . . Christian education is not primarily something we do. It is something we are.”

—Albert Bailey of Simcoe, Ontario, writing in a letter to the *Presbyterian Record* magazine

“This is a critical time for this church to speak out against torture.”

—Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger, speaking in June to the Mission & Ministry Board. The board approved a four-person committee to draft a statement on torture; Noffsinger will serve as ex officio.

“Sexuality has to do with relationships, and God has made us relational beings.”

—the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Church in Society. She was discussing the ELCA’s proposed “social statement” on human sexuality, which was considered by Assembly delegates this summer.

“Il n’y a que les montagnes qui ne se rencontrent jamais. (There are none so distant that fate cannot bring together.)”

—a French expression cited in a Church World Service report about a joint hurricane recovery effort in New Orleans

“We should be ready for the commotion that will be part of our gathering. Commotion can be exciting and invigorating if it is grounded in mutual respect and love.”

—Linda Jaramillo, executive minister for Justice and Witness Ministries in the United Church of Christ, reflecting on the UCC’s biennial General Synod (similar to the Church of the Brethren’s Annual Conference)

CULTUREVIEW

• **Christian Peacemaker Teams** said this spring that it might need to suspend or reduce some peacemaking programs because of a lack of funds. Donations from congregations and individuals dropped nearly 10 percent last year.

• The **Mennonite youth magazine *With*** has announced that it will end this year after 41 years of publication. Another Mennonite publication, *OurFaith Digest*, ended publication on June 30.

• The **religious makeup of the current 111th US Congress** roughly matches the overall American religious landscape, with overrepresentation among Jews and Mormons, according to new analysis by the nonpartisan Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Just over

half (55 percent) of House and Senate members who took office on Jan. 6 are Protestants, compared to 51 percent of the US population. The second-largest group, Catholics, make up 30 percent of lawmakers, compared to 24 percent of all Americans. (RNS)

• **An open letter** signed by more than 100 pastors and others in Mennonite Church USA calls on the church to “fully welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people,” according to a report in *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

• A new book released by *National Geographic*, titled ***Sacred Places of a Lifetime***, chronicles 500 of “the world’s most peaceful and powerful destinations.” One section is titled “Cradles of Faith.”



JUST FOR FUN: TOP 10

**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN’** This top 10 list was shared by MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek at the 2009 Annual Conference MESSENGER Dinner in San Diego, Calif.

**The top 10 ways the church would be different if the denominational offices were in southern California:**

10. Human Resources office frets as absentee rates soar.
9. Through a unique partnership with nearby Legoland, the General Offices are built entirely out of colorful interlocking bricks (and no doubt used as a backdrop in numerous Hollywood films).
8. Church of the Brethren tagline reads, “We’re, like, so totally continuing the work of Jesus, dude.”
7. Church grabs headlines when the San Diego Padres, who use a loveable friar as their mascot, use a loveable plainclothes Brethren minister instead.
6. Brethren in Pennsylvania and Virginia grouse about “those Western Brethren” running everything.
5. Building and Grounds staff responsibilities include grooming the sand on Brethren Beach.
4. Shamu is added to the Brethren logo, gracefully leaping through the baptismal waves at the bottom.
3. Disney features that annoying yet endearing ride, “It’s a Brethren world, after all.”
2. Mexico files an official complaint about all the illegal Brethren streaming across the border for fried ice cream.
1. Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes known as “the Brethrenator,” with his popular catchphrase, “I’ll be Mack!”



Glenn Riegel

# Let's talk about it

*Votes launch process of conversation about human sexuality*

Delegates at the 2009 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in San Diego approved a revised process for handling controversial issues, then quickly put that new process into action with two items on human sexuality.

**"A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues"** was passed by Annual Conference in 1988 but never utilized. This year Standing Committee (composed of delegates from the 23 districts) brought a motion to adopt a simplified and updated version under the same title. The revision passed overwhelmingly with one amendment: to shorten from 1 1/2 minutes to one minute the time speakers would have during floor discussion of topics using this process.

The 1988 paper had called for a committee that would provide resources on a given issue and facilitate denomination-wide conversation, but it did not specify doing anything with the information gathered. The revision outlines a fuller process of conversation for "special response" items that may take two to three years. It gives Standing Committee the responsibility of holding hearings across the denomination, and then bringing the issue back to Annual Conference.

David Shumate, the 2009 Conference moderator, said having a good process for controversial issues would provide a "surge protector" for the church. He noted that the church needs special time to work with issues that "try us as a body."

Delegates soon turned their attention to just such an issue, spending most of two sessions discussing the new business items "A Statement of Confession and Commitment" and "Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships." Standing Committee representatives Larry Dentler and Janice Kulp Long presented the items jointly.



Glenn Riegel

*Top, Helen Wenger of Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren chats on the Conference floor during a break; at left, a Conference participant ponders a business item.*

- The **"Statement of Confession and Commitment"** came from last year's Standing Committee, addressing the issue of homosexuality as one that "continues to bring tension and division within our Body." It confesses, "We are not of one mind on this matter," and declares that the church's 1983 paper, "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective," "remains our official position." The statement acknowledges tension between different parts of the 1983 paper, confesses "meanness and fighting" over the issue, and calls the church to stop un-Christian behavior.

"We are a diverse group, just as the delegates of our congregations are diverse," Dentler said. "It's no secret that the issue of homosexuality can divide us deeply." He said he felt "amazed that we could be unanimous" last year, when Standing Committee adopted its statement, "because there were persons of all theological perspectives." After further discussion this year, he realized that "some of us were seeing things in different ways." Some on Standing Committee see the statement as saying the 1983 paper is one "we need to stick to," he explained, while others see it as simply "what we have," and that the 1983 paper really opens up more opportunity for discussion.

- **"Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships"** came from Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., via Northern Indiana District. It refers to a sentence in the 1983 paper that same-sex covenantal relationships are "not acceptable" and asks "whether it is the will of the church that this language on same-sex covenantal relationships will continue to guide our journey together."

"Others' perspectives help me understand myself and our (church) body better," said Long, who is also on the pastoral team at Beacon Heights. "Our denomination can only find its way through present

**"BRETHREN SERVICE HAS BEEN THE GUIDING LIGHT OF OUR FELLOWSHIP, NOT RULES AND REGULATIONS."**

—Paul Hersch of Pacific Southwest District, speaking at the microphone about the need for greater tolerance and openness



*Above, Russell Payne Jr. of Coulson Church of the Brethren (Hillsville, Va.) speaks at one of the microphones on the Conference floor; at left, delegates vote on an item of business.*



#### LEARN MORE

Want to learn more about the 2009 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference? The following additional resources are available:

- **A wrap-up DVD** is available from Brethren Press for \$29.95. It contains highlights from the 2009 Annual Conference in San Diego, and lasts about 20 minutes (plus bonus material); also available is a DVD containing the five keynote sermons delivered at this year's Conference, for \$24.95. To order, visit [www.brethrenpress.com](http://www.brethrenpress.com) or call 800-441-3712.
- **A printed Conference wrapup** is available online at [www.brethren.org/site/DocServer/AC2009WrapUpColor.pdf?docID=4001](http://www.brethren.org/site/DocServer/AC2009WrapUpColor.pdf?docID=4001).
- **News updates** posted during the Conference, original sermon texts, photos, and a few video clips are available at [www.brethren.org/news](http://www.brethren.org/news).



**Annual Conference moderator David Shumate, left, and moderator-elect Shawn Flory-Replogle lead delegates through business.**

Ken Whang

brokenness as we seek God's light together." She clarified that Beacon Heights intends with the query simply to ask, "What words regarding covenantal relationships could God lead us to today?"

Debate on the two items was lengthy, with many people wanting to speak. A group of young adults began by reading a statement of "confession, commitment, and action" signed by about 180 youth and young adults calling for support and inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. "The future of the church cannot exist in this silenced hurt," it said, in part. "We call for true confession and commitment." They asked that Standing Committee's statement be rejected and rewritten.

Other expressions at the microphones ranged from affirmation for an intentional denomination-wide conversation, to commitment to biblical authority and the Bible's teachings on homosexuality, to weariness with the amount of time and energy already spent on the issue. Some expressed a desire to immediately reopen the 1983 statement. Several speakers said that it will be impossible for the whole church to come to agreement.

"There comes a time when you have to agree to lay things to rest," said Jim Myer, a minister at White Oak Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa., and a member of the committee that brought the 1983 paper. He spoke from

the floor in support of the recommendation for denominational conversation, but "with some reluctance" he said, because the church already has worked on these issues for some 30 years. His support came out of observing the Standing Committee process in creating its statement, he said, "that it was possible in this day and time to come up with something that received unanimous approval."

Delegates ultimately voted to approve the statement as a special response item and combined the intent of the Beacon Heights query with it, putting them into the newly revised process for strongly controversial issues. In doing so, the Conference turned down a recommendation from Standing Committee to postpone the query until a later time.

As specified by the process, Standing Committee then named a **Special Response Resource Committee** to develop resources that can aid the church in the conversation process. Named to the committee are Karen Long Garrett, a recent Bethany Seminary graduate and managing editor for *Brethren Life and Thought*; Myer, who is also a leader in the Brethren Revival Fellowship; Marie Rhoades, a staff member of On Earth Peace; John E. Wenger, a Church of the Brethren member and psychologist from Anderson, Ind.; and Carol Wise, executive director of the Brethren Mennonite Council for

## ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

The 2009 Annual Conference called Robert Alley of Harrisonburg, Va., as moderator-elect for 2010 and moderator for 2011. Alley retired earlier this year as pastor of Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren. He will serve next year assisting 2010 Annual Conference moderator Shawn Flory Replogle, pastor of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren.

Other election results included the following:

**Program and Arrangements Committee:** Victoria Jean (Sayers) Smith, Elizabethtown, Pa.

**Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:** Tim Button-Harrison, Ames, Iowa

**Committee on Interchurch Relations:** Jim Hardenbrook, Edinburg, Va.

**Bethany Theological Seminary trustee (representing the colleges):** David Witkovsky, Huntingdon, Pa.

**Brethren Benefit Trust board:** Carol Hess, Lancaster, Pa.

**On Earth Peace board:** David R. Miller, Dayton, Va.

In addition, the following board-made appointments were confirmed:

**Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees:**

Jerry Davis, La Verne, Calif., and John D. Miller, York, Pa. Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Minneapolis, Minn., was confirmed as a representative of the alumni association.

**Brethren Benefit Trust board:** Carol Ann Greenwood, Walkersville, Md., and Donna Forbes Steiner, Landisville, Pa.

**On Earth Peace board:** James S. Replogle, Bridgewater, Va., and Robbie Miller, Bridgewater, Va.

In **Standing Committee elections**, Mark Bausman (Idaho District), Luci Landes (Missouri/Arkansas), Nelda Rhoades Clark (Northern Plains), and Roger L. Forry (Western Pennsylvania) were called to the Standing Committee Nominating Committee.

And in **Ministers' Association** meetings, Rebecca House of Union Bridge, Md., was elected to the Ministers' Association executive committee.

## CASTING A VISION

Standing Committee approved the formation of a new committee that will have the task of discerning a long-range vision for the Church of the Brethren for each upcoming decade. The committee was recommended by the Church of the Brethren's Leadership Team, which includes the Annual Conference officers and the general secretary, and the Inter-Agency Forum.

In its decision, Standing Committee directed that the Vision Committee be implemented quickly enough to create a vision for the coming decade of 2011-2020. It also amended the paper, outlining a charter for the new committee that includes the charge to be "immersed in prayer, seeking God's purpose for our denomination."

The Vision Committee in the future will be appointed in the fifth year of the previous decade, to create a vision for the next decade (i.e. in 2015 for 2021-2030), and to report to Annual Conference in the eighth year of the previous decade. The eight-member committee will include a member from the Church of the Brethren staff or Mission and Ministry Board, a representative of each of the other Annual Conference agencies (Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace), and four members appointed by Standing Committee from the membership of the denomination.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests. Their work is to be shared by April 1.

The other main new business item was "**Query: Secret Oath-Bound Societies.**" The Conference respectfully returned the query, which came from Southern Pennsylvania District, and reaffirmed the statement on membership in secret societies passed by the 1954 Annual Conference—with an amendment asking for a three-member group that would develop resources to educate and inform the church on this topic. The Conference officers named a resource team of former general secretary Judy Mills Reimer; Bethany Theological Seminary professor of New Testament studies Dan Ulrich; and Harold Martin, a leader in the Brethren Revival Fellowship.

**Revised corporate bylaws for Church of the Brethren Inc.** were submitted for information, with the expectation that they will be brought for action at next year's Annual Conference in Pittsburgh. The revision comes following last year's major agency reorganization, as the former Association of Brethren Caregivers and Annual Conference Council were combined with the then-General Board under one corporate umbrella. The bylaws passed in 2008, which are now in force, are quite lengthy. The corporate attorney advised that a way be found to simplify them, general secretary Stan Noffsinger reported. Noffsinger invited additional comments and suggestions on the bylaws proposal to be sent to the Church of the Brethren Leadership Team.

**A report on child protection activity** was given by Kim Ebersole, director of Family Life and Older Adult Ministries. The report, called for by a 2007 query, shared results of a denomination-wide survey and affirmed the continuing relevance of the 1986 report of the Conditions of Childhood Task Force. It added three new recommendations for the denomination: that every Church of the Brethren congregation, district, agency, ministry area, program, and camp adopt and implement a child protection/child abuse prevention policy appropriate for its ministry setting; that the Church of the Brethren maintain resources to assist these groups in developing child protection/child abuse prevention policies; and that the church continue to help strengthen families and ensure that parents

and caregivers have the knowledge, skill, support, and resources to care for their children.

Delegates approved a zero cost-of-living increase for the **annual adjustment in the recommended ministerial cash salary table**, at the recommendation of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits



Ken Wenger

**Kevin Schatz, Irene Beltran, Carrie Fry-Miller, and Marie Rhoades share a statement on sexuality from a group of young adults.**

Advisory Committee. The committee explained that usually the increase is based on the percent increase in the Consumer Price Index; however, with the current economic situation the Index fell this year, and the group did not want to recommend a decrease in the salaries of pastors.

Other reports received by the Conference included agency reports from the Church of the Brethren, Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace; Living Peace Church sharing from the microphones; a final report from the long-running 300th Anniversary Committee; and a report from Program and Arrangements Committee, which announced the 2014 Annual Conference will be held in Columbus, Ohio.

The closing Conference business session included appreciation for retiring Annual Conference executive director Lerry Fogle, and the consecration of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren pastor Shawn Flory Replogle as moderator and Robert E. Alley as moderator-elect for 2010. 

Members of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference news team and communications staff contributed to this report.



**Prolific author Phyllis Tickle addresses this year's Messenger Dinner.**

Justin Fazio

# Emergence, ecumenism, and electronic media

## *Annual Conference meal events cover wide swath of topics*

Phyllis Tickle, founding religion editor of *Publishers' Weekly* and a leading author and speaker on the emergent church, spoke to more than 150 people as she headlined this year's *Messenger Dinner* at Annual Conference.

Tickle summarized the content of her newest book, *The Great Emergence*, noting that the church is going through a major upheaval—a metaphorical “cleaning of the attic”—something it tends to encounter about every 500 years.

“It’s a grand rummage sale, and we’re going through it,” she said, describing how faith groups decide what’s worth keeping and what must be re-imagined. The dominant form of Christianity that has existed for several centuries is losing “pride of place,” she said, while “a new form of Christianity is going to be birthed.”

She traced through the cycles of church history and world history from the time of Christ to the present, pointing out the significant changes and shifts that have occurred along the way, including the Great Schism and the Great Reformation. She explained to the crowd that it usually takes around 150 years for the “dust to settle” and for society to decide exactly where authority is now derived. She also pointed out that after each 500-year

buildup and change in power, Christianity typically spreads further around the globe.

The current era, which she has dubbed the “Great Emergence,” is characterized by information overload, a desire to be more missional and incarnational, non-hierarchical structures, the return of ancient Christian symbols and disciplines, and “radical obedience” to the call of Jesus.

### **Highlights from some of the many other meal events at Annual Conference:**

■ Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC), was the featured speaker at the annual **Ecumenical Luncheon** hosted by the Church of the Brethren’s Committee on Interchurch Relations (CIR). Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger and Kinnamon celebrated the active relationship between the two bodies. Noffsinger has served the NCC in several capacities, including his new appointment as NCC vice president. Kinnamon thanked the denomination for its active role in ecumenism, and praised Jordan Blevins, a member of the Church of the Brethren, for his role in the Eco-Justice Program of the NCC.

AC 2009 San Diego

### **BITS AND PIECES**

**When and where:** The 2009 Annual Conference was held June 26-30 at the Town & Country Resort and Convention Center in San Diego.

**Attendance:** A total of 2,077 people registered, including 670 delegates from congregations and districts, and 1,407 nondelegates.

**Quilt auction:** The annual auction, sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren (AACB), raised \$6,275 for hunger relief.

**Blood drive:** The Brethren Disaster Ministries-sponsored drive succeeded in surpassing its daily goal of 50 units. The drive was conducted by the American Red Cross over two days, with 121 units collected.

**Fitness challenge:** Winners of the Brethren Benefit Trust 5K race, which drew 120 runners and walkers, were: top male runner, Jerry Crouse (18:34); top female runner, Kelsi Beam (21:33); top male walker, Don Shankster (30:10); top female walker, Karen Crim (39:45).

**Awards:** *Caregiving Awards* from the Caring Ministries of the Church of the Brethren went to Dale and Beverly Minnich, Larry and Alice Petry, Paul Hoyt, Charles (Chuck) Cable, and Verne Greiner. Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren received the annual “*Open Roof Award*” given to a Brethren congregation or organization for improved accessibility and participation by persons with disabilities. Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Ind., was honored by the



Left, A group sings at the Brethren Revival Fellowship Luncheon; right, children enjoy the Pacific Ocean on a field trip.

Keith Hollenberg

Joel Burnhough-Cayford

■ **Congregational Life Ministries** held its dinner Sunday evening, June 28. Intercultural Ministries director Ruben Deoleo introduced keynote speaker Eric Law, whose topic was, "Media, Faith, and Congregational Life: Connecting Cyber Space and Sacred Space." Law, founder and executive director of Kaleidoscope Institute for Competent Leadership in a Diverse and Changing World, reminded those attending that we in the church always have used media and technology. Stained glass windows, organ music, and bulletins are media and they use technology. Today's media is texting, YouTube, and twitter. Law's institute is developing three-to-five minute videos that can be used to draw individuals to reflect on faith issues (see [www.ladiocese.org/ki](http://www.ladiocese.org/ki)).

■ H. Eric Schockman, president and CEO of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger addressed the **Global Ministries Dinner** with a story from the rabbis. In his talk titled, "Repairing the World: Creating Communities of Justice and Compassion," Schockman said, "Scripture must be put into social action. Scripture must live in our lives, especially in the issue of hunger." Symbolic elements of the Passover Seder were distributed at the meal:

■ Pamela Brubaker, professor of Religion and Ethics at California Lutheran University, was the featured speaker at the **Womaen's Caucus Luncheon**. She shared stories of her recent journeys to Columbia and the Philippines to learn about the circumstances that oppress communities of women and minority populations.

The luncheon dovetailed Brubaker's stories of global peace and justice concerns with the lifetime peacemaking efforts and passion of the late Phil and Louise Baldwin Riemann, co-pastors of Northview Church of the Brethren in Indianapolis,

who were killed in a car accident last winter. Two of their children, Ken and Tina, accepted the annual Friend of the Caucus Award on their parents' behalf. They also accepted stained glass pieces specially created for them and their sister, Cherie, based on the design of a banner from the Riemans' home.

■ Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) reviewed and celebrated the first 10 years of its Brethren Mission Fund, and received financial reports for the fund, presented by Carl Brubaker, at the annual **BRF Luncheon**. The Brethren Mission Fund was established Sept. 12, 1998, at BRF's Annual Meeting held at Heidelberg Church of the Brethren.

■ Those attending the annual **On Earth Peace breakfast** were invited to a unique opportunity to provide feedback about peacemaking within the Church of the Brethren, part of a new strategic plan On Earth Peace is shaping as it marks its 35th anniversary.

■ "The first time Marie Hamilton walked into a cell block she felt ashamed, seeing men with haunted eyes staring out at her from steel cages from both sides of a corridor," Melanie Snyder said at the **Brethren Press breakfast**. "Her first thought was, 'We do this in America?'" Snyder, a member of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, is the author of *Grace Goes to Prison*, to be published by Brethren Press this fall. Snyder shared stories of Hamilton's 30 years of volunteering within the Pennsylvania prison system. *Grace Goes to Prison* can be ordered in advance through Brethren Press (800-441-3712). 

Justin Faiola, a young adult member of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and student at Harrisburg Area Community College, covered this year's Messenger Dinner. Karen Garrett, Gimbiya Kettering, Frank Ramirez, Melissa Troyer, and Walt Wiltschek also contributed to this report.

*Committee on Interchurch Relations* for its relationship with Afghan families in the Fort Wayne area and its support of Afghan exchange students. Kay Guyer, a recent high school graduate from Woodbury, Pa., was the winner of the *Annual Conference theme video contest*, sponsored by the Church of the Brethren's Congregational Life Ministries. Her winning entry was titled "Brethren We Have Met to Jump".

■ **Saying farewell:** Annual Conference executive director Larry Fogle, who is retiring at the end of this year, was recog-

nized at a Sunday afternoon reception. Fogle began his work with the 2003 Conference held in Boise, Idaho. Chris Douglas was recently called as the new director of the Conference Office.

■ **Local support:** La Verne Church of the Brethren, the largest Church of the Brethren congregation in southern California and located about two hours from San Diego, had about 125 people participating in the Conference at various points. The local San Diego First Church of the Brethren also provided significant sup-

port and provided tours of the new eco-friendly Friends Center on its property.

■ **Rainbow connection:** Several hundred Conferencegoers could be seen wearing colorful, knit scarves in rainbow patterns. Womaen's Caucus offered the scarves for those wanting to express welcome to those of diverse sexual orientations. Volunteers knitted and crocheted the scarves, along with hats, bracelets, ties, and other creations.

■ **Next year:** The 2010 Annual Conference will take place July 3-7 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Local activist John Fanestil tells youth about immigration issues at the Mexican border.

by Ryan Roebuck

# Looking beyond the border



*Youth at Annual Conference explore immigration issues*

**While the adults were sitting through business meetings** on Sunday afternoon of Annual Conference, the denomination's middle and high school youth went on a fun-filled and educational trip to the Mexican border.

This trip taught the youth not only what is going on at the border today, but what the plans for the future are and what the Bible teaches us about our brothers and sisters across the border. The youth met in the shadow of a giant Mexican flag that was waving in Tijuana, just on the other side of two daunting barriers that separated the "land of the free" from its neighbors.

The original border was decided in 1848 by the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty; it was set one Spanish league south of the San Diego Bay. The first fence along this border was constructed in the 1990s from US Navy landing mats that had been used in the Gulf War. These mats were individually numbered, and you can still see the numbers that run, in numerical order, all the way to the coast.

The second fence was recently constructed about 100 yards north of the original fence, mostly constructed of 15-foot-high cement posts spaced no more than 4 inches apart and topped with razor wire, sensors, and security lights. The idea was to create a corridor in which the US Border Patrol could apprehend any illegal aliens while they are still between the two fences. Even this new fence is not impenetrable, but it is effective. It takes the average person a minute more to get past this fence than the earlier one, which gives Border Patrol time to track and detain any illegal immigrants.

John Fanestil, executive director of the Foundation for Change and a former Methodist pastor, met with the

group at Border Field State Park and explained some of the difficult problems with US immigration policy. There are two main motives for a person to illegally cross the border into the states, he said: family and money.

Fanestil told the youth about Martín, an illegal immigrant whose full-time job as an electrical worker in Tijuana earned him \$150 a week, whereas the same job in San Diego would get him that in one day. Martín had a wife and children who were American citizens and he himself wasn't, so when he was deported to Mexico he was also separated from his family.

Foundation for Change supports leaders and organizations working for social justice in the San Diego-Tijuana region, seeking more visas for those who are trying to get with their families and live a happy life raising their children in the relative prosperity of the US.

Whatever the government's actions, Fanestil said, the Bible calls us in Leviticus to treat an

alien in our land as "a citizen among us" and to "love that alien as you love yourself," which is, according to Jesus, one of the most important commandments: to love your neighbor as yourself. Likewise, the famous story in Matthew 25:31-46 reminds us that not only is helping strangers when they are hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison doing so to Christ, but also keeping those strangers away from us is doing so to Christ.

These scriptures call us to treat our brothers and sisters from the other side of the two fences as we would treat our own kin, he said. They are no different from you or me simply because they live on the other side of a fence, or on the other side of the ocean.

Christ died for these brethren, just as he died for us. We are not called to fear our neighbor, but to love our neighbor, and to "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7). **✠**

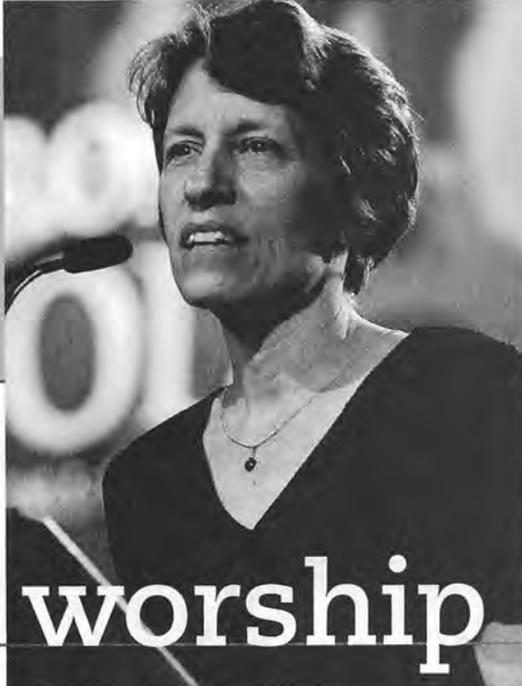


Glenn Ringel

## DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to the trip to the Mexican border, the 100-plus junior and senior high youth at Annual Conference also learned about ecological issues on a trip to the San Diego Wild Animal Park, did service projects in the area, enjoyed a cookout with authentic Mexican cuisine on the beach, and had daily worship times together.

Ryan Roebuck is a member of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren and will be a senior in high school this year. Currently on the Church of the Brethren National Youth Cabinet, he served as an intern with MESSENGER at this year's Annual Conference.



**Clockwise from top left: Jaime Diaz, Nancy Heishman, Eric Law, Marcus Harden, Dick Shreckhise, and moderator David Shumate share during the week's worship services.**

# Words from worship

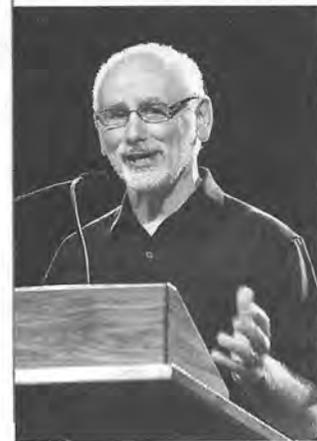
Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Ken Wenger



Ken Wenger

**Some highlights from the sermons and other parts of the five worship services held during the 2009 Annual Conference in San Diego:**

**"The scripture teaches us that our relationships with one another are commentary on our relationship with God. . . . They are inextricably bound up together."** —2009 Annual Conference moderator David Shumate, Virlina District executive, Friday evening speaker



Glenn Riegel

**"The risk of holy ground is simply this: When we stand on holy ground . . . God will give us holy work to do. The risk of holy ground is that everything will change."** —Dick Shreckhise, Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren associate pastor, Saturday evening speaker

**"Too often we put structure first. Put Jesus first, and structure the church to make it happen."** —Dick Shreckhise

**"The real issue is how do I keep track of (my assumptions), so that when I encounter you I'm not seeing you for who I want you to be, but I'm encountering you for who you really are."** —Eric Law, ordained Episcopal priest and executive director of the Kaleidoscope Institute for Competent Leadership, Sunday morning speaker

**"I believe that God is deeply committed to the transformation of all creation."** —Nancy Heishman, Church of the Brethren mission co-coordinator in the Dominican Republic, Monday evening speaker

**"My dear Brethren, let us seek common ground. Let us not put aside our differences, though; let's engage them."** —Jaime Diaz, pastor of Castañer Church of the Brethren in Puerto Rico, Tuesday morning speaker

**"'Do not be afraid' is in the Bible 365 times, one for every day of the year! When we hear it repeatedly, maybe God is trying to tell us something."** —Jaime Diaz

**"I have truly been blessed by the Holy Spirit through an amazing relationship with Jesus the Christ. When someone asks me, I usually answer, 'I'm blessed.' "**

—Vicki Minyard, member of Pomona (Calif.) Fellowship Church of the Brethren, sharing her testimony of a journey through homelessness and addictions to a new calling

**"I'm wondering whether God's love for us is deeper than our pockets. I would hope yes!"**

—Joe Vecchio, administrative assistant for Pacific Southwest District and the Monday evening worship leader, giving the offering invitation



*Saturday afternoon offered a variety of recreational activities, including water games on the James Madison University campus.*

Glenn Riegel

# TRANSFORMATION, MIDDLE-SCHOOL

by Walt Wiltschek

## NATIONAL JUNIOR HIGH CONFERENCE DRAWS 600 TO VIRGINIA

**M**usic leader Ken Medema promised it at the beginning of the weekend: "This place is going to rock!" He was right.

For about 40 hours, the Church of the Brethren National Junior High Conference took James Madison University by storm. About 600 junior high youth and advisors met on the Harrisonburg, Va., campus June 19-21 for sizzling worship, workshops, recreation, and more.

It was the second national-scale conference held by the denomination's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office for the junior high/middle school age group. A regional conference took place in 2005, and the first official national conference was held at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College in 2007.

Medema, who is blind, was a return performer from the 2007 event. He said several times that the Brethren youth

were the best middle school audience he had encountered anywhere. In addition to leading music for the four worship services during the weekend—including his signature song, "Bound Together"—Medema also gave a high-energy concert Saturday evening.

Another familiar face at the conference was actor Ted Swartz, who now performs as part of the troupe Ted & Co. Swartz and Jeff Raught of Lancaster, Pa., led worship both Friday and Saturday evenings, through the story of a homeless man named Zeus and the angel Gabriel, who encouraged the lonely and bitter Zeus to find his gift of telling "God stories" again.

In an introduction to the drama, Swartz said it would show the story of God's interactions with "God's greatest and most frustrating creation of all time—us!" Swartz and Raught played out some of those interactions through the stories of Abraham, Jeremiah, Joshua, Jesus' disciples, and others as Zeus gradually rediscovered his gift.

His journey echoed the theme of the weekend: "Transformed: Inside Out." Waynesboro (Pa.) Church of the Brethren associate pastor Amy Messler summed up that work of transformation in the closing worship Sunday morning—sharing from her own journey, Paul's words in

Glenn Riegel

*Actors Jeff Raught, left, and Ted Swartz share "God stories" during some of the weekend's worship times.*



### ON SCREEN

Videographers David Sollenberger and Larry Glick created a DVD with highlights of the National Junior High Conference weekend. Check with junior high youth or advisors at your congregation or in your area to view it. Or to order an expanded version (\$5 each, including shipping), contact the Youth/Young Adult Ministry Office at 800-323-8039.

Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



**At left, Youth Peace Travel Team members Marianne Houff and Jessica Flory Steury share a peace-themed skit during worship; at right, Middlebury (Ind.) youth pastor Rich Troyer chats with Kullen Lawrence.**

# STYLE

Romans, and the way God works in our lives.

"When God gets a hold of the little things in your life, you start to see things differently," Messler said. "You have so much to give, and only you can give it."

The youth also heard earlier from 17-year-old anti-slavery activist Zach Hunter, founder of "Loose Change to Loosen Chains" and author of *Generation Change*. Hunter shared how he became interested in the issue at age 12 and decided to move beyond being angry about it to actually doing something about it.

"The step between interest and passion is always action," Hunter told the youth, "Take that step. . . . You guys can make a change right where you're at. You are the someone, and today is the day."

After the end of that service, the junior highers were invited to take part in a "reverse offering." Each one was given \$10 that they could either turn back in on the way out of the auditorium or take with them and "multiply it in service to God or others," eventually sending back the proceeds.

Participants also had two slots in which to choose from about two dozen workshops that were offered, including one on ideas of what to do with the \$10 offering. Others addressed topics including environmental issues, bullying, consumerism, peace, music, drama, and social networking; several were designed especially for advisors.

In between those events, the campus was filled with frisbees, kickballs, skateboards, footballs, water games, camp games, art projects, and even a circle of "Duck, Duck, Goose," during both organized and spontaneous recreation times.

As the conference concluded on Sunday, participants were invited to take a T-shirt they had brought with them and turn it

## DID YOU KNOW?

Senior high youth will have their National Youth Conference July 17-22, 2010, in Fort Collins, Colo. Visit [www.2010nyc.org](http://www.2010nyc.org) for details. Another National Junior High Conference will tentatively be held in 2011.

Glenn Riegel



**Youth work on their guitar skills during free time at the junior high conference.**

inside out, then put it on over their clothing—tag sticking out and all—as a symbol of the transformation they had experienced and were called to.

Medema summed up the "holy ground" feeling of the weekend in a song during that closing service, expressing the hope that life back home "will be just a little like what we've seen here." 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER.

# CALLING: by Ben Green

## A LIFETIME OF LISTENING

### DISCERNMENT OFTEN REQUIRES PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT'S WITHIN US

*"Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence" (1 Kings 19:11b-12).*

**A**s followers of Jesus we want to devote our lives to continuing his work in the world. We want to know that our particular constellation of talents, traits, and resources are engaged in the most productive manner. In short, we want to find our calling. "Each one of us," says writer Thomas Merton, "is called to a special place in the Kingdom. If we find that place we will be happy. If we do not find it we can never be completely happy."

How do we sense our call? How can we have confidence we will find (or have found) the best place to devote our energy?

We can be forgiven for imagining that our call always comes from "out there" somewhere. After all, when we were children we were often called from "out there." Mom called us away from play to dinner and to bed. Teachers called us to give our attention to the lesson of the day. As adults we continue to hear calls from "out there"—sometimes crudely, like the automated telephone calls at dinner time; sometimes more subtly, as the dawning on our con-

sciousness of compelling unmet needs in the world.

Likewise, we can be forgiven for imagining God must call us from "out there" in dramatic fashion at rare, pivotal points in our life journey. After all, the most colorful and memorable Bible stories seem to follow this pattern: Jonah in the belly of the fish, Paul on the Damascus road, Isaiah in the temple on the Lord's day, and Moses at the burning bush—to name a few. Although no one I know has experienced such a thing, the bright light from above accompanied with a loud voice from heaven is, for some, the quintessential model for God's call.

The testimonies of many, from Bible times to the present, suggest that one would do better to look inward rather than outward to discern his or her call. Sociologist, writer, and teacher Parker J. Palmer puts it this way: "Today I understand vocation quite differently—not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice "out there" calling me to become something I'm not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God."

We are invited to turn away from the noise described in the passage from 1 Kings—the wind, earthquake, and fire, as it were—and to go to a quiet temple deep within ourselves where we may listen for the paradoxical

"sound of sheer silence." In that quiet place we may find freedom from external expectations calling us to be what we're not. We may meet ourselves and our God in a fresh way. Musing on the interplay of self and God, Thomas Merton observed, ". . . He loves us more than we love ourselves, as if we were Himself. He loves us, moreover, with our own will, with our own decisions. How can we understand the mystery of our union with God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves?"

Finding one's calling, then, is not a matter of gazing into heaven waiting for a definitive announcement. We already have in our hearts God-given hopes and dreams, desires and interests. What's left to do is to listen quietly, honestly to that which is within. In fact, finding one's calling means a lifetime of listening. There is no ordained trajectory from appren-



Jane Pyle



BVS file photo

**A MISTAKE ALONG THE WAY OR AN UNWISE CHOICE DOES NOT FOREVER PREVENT US FROM REALIZING OUR CALL. INDEED, IN THAT QUIET PLACE WITHIN WHICH GOD LOVES US WITH OUR OWN WILL AND OUR OWN DECISIONS, MISTAKES TAKE A DIFFERENT CAST.**

ticeship to comfortable retirement.

Some people will make one choice of a trade, profession, mission, or cause, but many will choose several times. Careers change. Jobs end. Reversals happen. We sometimes choose wisely, sometimes unwisely. A mistake along the way or an unwise choice does not forever prevent us from realizing our call. Indeed, in that quiet place within which God loves us with our own will and our own decisions, mistakes take a different cast.

Kentucky farmer, writer, and teacher Wendell Berry observes: "Often I have not known where I was going until I was already there. I have had my share of desires and goals, but my life has come to me or I have gone to it mainly by way of mistakes and surprises. Often I have received better than I deserved. Often my fairest hopes have rested on bad mistakes. I am an ignorant pilgrim, crossing a dark valley. And yet for a long time, looking back, I have been unable to shake off the feeling that I have been led—make of that what you will."

John Woolman is an excellent example of one who listened for a lifetime (and, coincidentally, of someone who literally crossed dark valleys, often alone and on foot.) Woolman (1720-1772) was an itinerant Quaker preacher who advocated against conscription, military taxation, and slavery. Some describe his views on the environment and concern for animals and creation as ahead of his time, but he was simply following the insight he received in his internal conversations with God.

He refused to ride in coaches when he felt the horses were being mistreated. Instead of enjoying the hospitality of a host whose comforts derived from the labor of slaves he would reside with the slaves. His journals, much more than an account of his travels, are a window into his heart. He was not one to rail about a cause without regard for his audience; instead, we find him frequently listening to the direction his heart would lead him. Sometimes he remained silent; sometimes he spoke truth with well-chosen words. He describes the motivation that flowed from the inside out as the "motion of love."

Apart from the sheer beauty and poetry of Woolman's phrase, "a motion of love" can become a practical measure for discerning our call. We students of human nature are regrettably seldom surprised by our capacity to delude ourselves. If we fail to respect the patience and honesty that listening to one's heart requires, we may be tempted to settle for decisions and actions based on lesser reasons, such as pride, ambition, timidity, or false modesty.

The phrase, then, becomes a test or measure of our decision as we examine our heart and motivations with the question, "Is my intended action (the call I hear and wish to follow) a motion of love?" ❧

Ben Green is a member of the Sunnyslope Church (Church of the Brethren/United Church of Christ) in Wenatchee, Wash., and will serve as moderator of Oregon/Washington District in 2009-2010. His wife, Carol Bowman, is coordinator of stewardship formation and education for the Church of the Brethren.



**WORLD MISSION OFFERING**

This annual fall offering for Church of the Brethren ministries has focused on aspects of "call" over the past several years. This year's theme is "Called . . . by example," drawing from John 13. The offering's observance this year is set for Oct. 11. Numerous resources are available online at [www.brethren.org/site/PageServer?pagename=give\\_WorldMissionOffering](http://www.brethren.org/site/PageServer?pagename=give_WorldMissionOffering), or call 800-323-8039 and ask for the Stewardship office.

# 1 & 2 Peter:

by Harold S. Martin

## Letters of encouragement

Two epistles offer exhortation but have very different tones



**T**here are good reasons to hold the traditional view that the two letters of Peter are the work of Simon Peter, son of Jonas, and one of the Twelve. Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Peter was the first of the apostles to recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Matt. 16:13-17).

The first epistle of Peter is a letter of hope designed to encourage and strengthen believers who are passing through difficult times. The second epistle centers on the theme of growth and maturity in the Christian life, especially in light of the rise of false teaching and the certainty of Christ's second coming.

Among the special characteristics and emphases in the first epistle of Peter are its stress on hope, and the continuous chain of exhortations. First Peter has a consolatory tone. The letter emphasizes the suffering of Christ and the example he set in not retaliating. We are to follow in his steps (2:20-21).

### 1 & 2 PETER: A CLOSER LOOK

**Author:** The apostle Peter

**When written:** c. AD. 65-68

**Notable sections:** Our secure inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5); a call to holy living (1 Peter 1:13-16); show submission and honor in marriage (1 Peter 3:1-7); how to respond in the midst of suffering (1 Peter 4:7-19); some traits of a godly character (2 Peter 1:5-11); God's desire for all to be saved (2 Peter 3:8-9); the passing of the heavens and the earth (2 Peter 3:10-13).

**Well-known verses:** "[God] ... has given us ... a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3-4); "You know that you were ransomed ... not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19); "Always be ready to make your defense (or, to "give an answer"/KJV) to any-

one who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15); "Do not adorn yourselves outwardly ... by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be ... the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:3-4); "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7); "For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned ... [and] brought a flood on the world of the ungodly ... and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes ... [he] made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:4-6); "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

**Other notes:** At the close of his second letter, Peter mentions the letters of Paul and calls them "scripture" (3:15-16). He considered the letters of Paul as part of the scriptures.

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(1 PETER 1:18-19)**



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### **A broad outline of 1 Peter:**

1. Christians are a privileged people (1:3-2:10)
2. Christians are a pilgrim people (2:11-3:12)
3. Christians are a persecuted people (3:13-5:11)

Peter's conclusion is that believers who are undergoing trials are to trust the Lord and know that other Christians around the world are also being persecuted. After they have suffered, they can be certain that God will give them eternal glory. He will restore, support, strengthen, and establish them (5:10).

**The second epistle of Peter is very different from 1 Peter.** While 1 Peter is a letter of joyful hope in the face of suffering, 2 Peter is an epistle of standing for truth, and persevering in Christ in light of prevailing falsehood and the coming judgment of God (3:14).

Five books of the New Testament were written specifically to combat the rising tide of error in the church. Those short writings are 2 Peter, Jude, and 1, 2, & 3 John—all of them composed

after 60 AD. Peter's purpose was to stimulate strong faith, and to remind believers that the coming of the Lord will not be delayed beyond the time God has planned for it (3:11-13).

### **A broad outline of 2 Peter:**

1. Provisions for spiritual growth (1:3-21)
2. Dangers of false teaching (2:1-22)
3. Reminders of the Lord's return (3:1-13)

The letters of Peter were written to Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman provinces of Asia Minor. Peter, in his epistles, applies the deep truths of God to the practical problems of life. Peter exhorts the people of God to live lives of purity and godliness while they wait for the Lord's coming (2 Peter 3:14). 

Harold S. Martin is an author and ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. He lives in Lititz, Pa.

MESSENGER'S "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in October: 1, 2, & 3 John, by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm.

## UPCOMINGEVENTS

**Sept. 6** Brethren Press fall curriculum quarter begins

**Sept. 7-11** National Older Adult Conference, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

**Sept. 13** Bethany Theological Seminary Sunday

**Sept. 18-19** Northern Indiana District conference, Milford, Ind.; Southern Pennsylvania District conference, McAlisterville, Pa.; West Marva District conference, Moorefield, W.Va.

**Sept. 20-Oct. 9** Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 287 orientation, New Windsor, Md.

**Sept. 20-21** Brethren Advocacy Days, Washington, D.C.

**Sept. 21** International Day of Prayer for Peace

**Sept. 24-26** On Earth Peace board meeting, New Windsor, Md.

**Sept. 25-26** Missouri/Arkansas District conference, Roach, Mo.

**Sept. 25-27** Oregon/Washington District conference, Cle Elum, Wash.

**Oct. 4** World Communion Sunday

**Oct. 9-10** Atlantic Northeast District conference, Elizabethtown, Pa.; Atlantic Southeast District conference, Arcadia, Fla.; Idaho District conference, Nampa, Idaho

**Oct. 11** World Mission Offering

**Oct. 16-17** Middle Pennsylvania District conference, Huntingdon, Pa.

**Oct. 16-19** Mission and Ministry Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.



*Church of the Brethren staff and visitors engage in small-group discussion during the Mission and Ministry Board meetings before Annual Conference in San Diego.*

Ken Wenger

## Mission and Ministry Board acts on 2010 budget, discusses statement on torture

The Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren addressed a full agenda at a pre-Annual Conference meeting June 26, led by chair Eddie Edmonds.

The board adopted a balanced budget with a parameter of \$4,962,000 for the church's Core Ministries in 2010, with the understanding that if staff cannot meet the parameter a deficit budget may be presented to the board at its October meeting. The decision requires another reduction of \$381,000 in expenses compared to the present year's budget. The board will make a final decision on the 2010 budget in October.

Discussion of the budget centered on a phrase in treasurer Judy Keyser's report, indicating that the recommendation for 2010 would mean "the loss of some major ministries." General secretary Stan Noffsinger explained that a plan was not yet in place for the required reduction in expenses for next year, but he anticipates a number of measures including reviewing staff positions that come open before filling them, reviewing the cost of the church's properties and programs, and no increase in employee salaries or benefits in 2010.

• Stewardship and Donor Development director Ken Neher presented the results of a survey by fundraising consulting firm RSI, on the feasibility of a new capital campaign to support denominational ministries. The survey found both "unprecedented" high levels of support for denominational ministry, he reported, as well as lack of confidence from potential donors in the capacity of the church to raise a large amount of money, and skepticism from some over the purpose of the campaign.

RSI recommended a number of next steps, Neher said, including to postpone implementation of the proposed campaign,

engage in board development, revise the "case statement" for support to give more details, and—when ready—to adopt a multifaceted campaign and to retain fundraising counsel to start the campaign. The board adopted an executive committee recommendation to receive the report and request staff to give clarification of the need and rationale for the campaign.

• The board formed a committee to write a resolution on the issue of torture, working with the general secretary. Noffsinger reported encouragement from ecumenical colleagues to address the issue, saying that the Church of the Brethren currently does not have a statement on torture. The four-person committee will include board members Andy Hamilton, John Katonah, and Tammy Kiser, and a staff member to be named by the general secretary.

• The board selected a new executive committee: Dale Minnich, who will serve as chair through 2011; Ben Barlow, who will serve as chair-elect through 2011, and then as chair through 2013; and at-large members Verne Greiner and Andy Hamilton. The executive committee also includes ex officio members general secretary Stan Noffsinger and 2010 Annual Conference moderator Shawn Flory Replogle.

• Stephen Breck Reid has been appointed by the board to the denomination's Committee on Interchurch Relations. Reid is a former academic dean at Bethany Theological Seminary, and currently is professor of Hebrew Bible at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.

• The executive committee announced that it is starting a process for a performance review for Noffsinger, whose present contract ends in June 2011. The performance review will culminate at the October meeting of the board.

*Disaster project leader Steve Keim designs a poster related to the disaster relief experience while at the training in Louisiana.*



Courtesy of Brethren Disaster Ministries

## New disaster project leaders get solid training in Louisiana

"I always knew there was a lot that went on behind the scenes but I had no idea . . .," said one participant during a Brethren Disaster Ministries project leadership training held May 26-June 4.

The 10-day training event brought 16 individuals from across the country to the Brethren Disaster Ministries project in Louisiana, focusing on servant leadership, teamwork, and communication. The event also included workshops on safety, volunteer management, household management, cooking, construction management, record keeping, and more.

Interspersed between workshops, participants were given hands-on opportunities to participate in construction activities as they learned new skills and honed skills in areas such as drywall, window and door installation, flooring, and trim carpentry. During a day-long workshop presented by On Earth Peace, participants learned about

different personality types and how they affect teamwork, communication, and interpersonal relationships.

Called a success by both participants and trainers, a similar model for workshops is expected to be used in future trainings. Brethren Disaster Ministries expects to offer another project leader training in the near future; interested individuals should contact 800-451-4407.

## New Community Project purchases rainforest tract

Brethren-related New Community Project (NCP) has announced the successful purchase and preservation of 137 acres of threatened rainforest adjacent to the Cuyabeno Wildlife Production Reserve in the northern Ecuadorian Amazon. Described as a "dream come true" by staff of NCP partner Fundación Selva: Vida Sin Fronteras, the parcel includes four streams and extraordinary plant and animal diversity. The final cost of the parcel was \$27,000, all of which was raised through donations by individuals, camps, and congregations.

"With the Ecuadorian Amazon being one of the most biodiverse places in God's creation, and with some 500,000 acres being lost every year to human activities, this was a chance to put our finger in a small hole in the dike," NCP director David Radcliff said. Principle threats to Ecuador's Amazon region are logging, invasion by impoverished settlers, and the repercussions of oil exploration, including forest and stream destruction and oil roads opening up the forest to outsiders, he said.

The land will be owned and managed by Fundación Selva, which will commence reforesting the portion of the parcel that had been deforested by the previous owner. A small segment of the land will be used to set up a workshop for local indigenous people to carve craft items from the tagua nut, sometimes called "vegetable ivory" for its hardness, ivory color, and the way it can be polished to a sheen and made into jewelry and other items. Tagua is an abundant tree in the area, can be sustainably harvested, and will bring much-needed income to native communities. NCP plans to market the products along with other fair-trade items. See [www.newcommunityproject.org](http://www.newcommunityproject.org) for more details.

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• **Justin Barrett** resigned as program assistant for the Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships office, effective July 30. He began in the position on Sept. 24, 2007. He will be relocating to Massachusetts.

• The position of director of the Church of the Brethren Sudan mission initiative has been eliminated, as part of a re-evaluation of the needs of Global Mission Partnerships. **Bradley Bohrer** left the position on July 31, after which he received a three-month severance package. The Sudan mission was initiated by the former Church of the Brethren General Board in October 2005. It will continue as a program of Global Mission Partnerships, under the leadership of executive director Jay Wittmeyer. "We are committed to the mission in Sudan, although we are eliminating the director position. We continue to maintain a position vacancy for mission workers in Sudan," Wittmeyer said. All designated gifts to the Sudan mission continue to be held in a special fund to support future in-country work by Brethren mission staff. Bohrer had directed the initiative since September 2006.

• **Joshua Brockway** has accepted the newly created position of director for Spiritual Life and Discipleship in the Church of the Brethren's Congregational Life Ministries office, effective Jan. 4, 2010. He will leave a position as instructor in Brethren Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind. Brockway's seminary employment concludes on Dec. 31. He will teach an online class, "History of Christianity I," during Bethany's fall semester. In previous work, he has been an interim pastor at East Atlanta Christian Fellowship, provided campus ministry at Manchester College, and directed Exploring Your Call at Bethany. He holds a degree from Manchester College, a master of arts in theology from Bethany, a master of divinity from Candler School of Theology, and is completing a doctor of philosophy at Catholic University of America.

• Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) campus pastor **Steve Crain** resigned in July to develop programs and educational opportunities for young married couples and singles

at Trinity Episcopal Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. He had served as campus pastor since July 2007. Crain will continue to teach as an adjunct at the college. The college begins a search for a new campus pastor in the fall, coordinated by Beth Sweitzer-Riley, vice president for student development. Planning for interim leadership of campus ministries is under way.

• **Edward R. Farmer** has been called as director of seminary computing for Bethany Theological Seminary and Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Ind., beginning Aug. 1. Farmer has extensive experience in computer systems management and network integration and administration. He had been a systems engineer for Dayton Cincinnati Technology Services since 2004 and tech coordinator for Precious Blood Elementary School in Trotwood, Ohio, since 2007. He holds degrees from Albion (Mich.) College and the University of Texas at Dallas, and also has been an adjunct instructor for use of computer software at Indiana Vocational Technical College.

• **Cyndi Fecher** was named managing editor of the *Gather 'Round* curriculum project of Brethren Press and the Mennonite Publishing Network, as of Aug. 3. She will work out of the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. Fecher was *Gather 'Round* project assistant from 2006 to 2007, and more recently had been doing writing, editing, layout, and proofreading as publications coordinator for Brethren Benefit Trust since Jan. 2. She also brings technical expertise in website management and publishing software.

• **Amy Gingerich** resigned as managing editor of *Gather 'Round*, the curriculum published jointly by Brethren Press and the Mennonite Publishing Network, in order to accept a new position as editorial director of Herald Press. Gingerich had served as managing editor of *Gather 'Round* for more than four years, since February 2005. Her last day of employment with *Gather 'Round* was Aug. 7, and she began her new position on Aug. 17.

• **John R. Moyers** was called in July to serve as interim district executive for West Marva District. He is an ordained minister serving as part-time pastor of

two congregations: Harman (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren and Red Creek, Bethel Church of the Brethren in Dryfork, W.Va. Moyers has served as pastor of several other congregations; he is also a physical education teacher and has recently served on the Church of the Brethren's Mission and Ministry Board. Contact information for the district office remains: West Marva District, 384 Dennett Rd., Oakland, MD 21550; 301-334-9270; wmarva@brethren.org. Moyers can be reached directly at jemoe@frontiernet.net or 304-749-7307. Former district executive **Stephen E. Abe** concluded his service on June 30, rather than Sept. 30 as previously announced.

• **Becky Ullom** was named director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Church of the Brethren, effective Aug. 31. Ullom had been director of Identity and Relations with the Church of the Brethren, with responsibility for the denominational website and a range of other communication tasks since July 2004. Previously she coordinated the 2004 National Young Adult Conference and 2002 National Youth Conference (June 2001-July 2002). She has also taught high school English. She has served in several ecumenical settings, including as a young adult steward with World Council of Churches and as a delegate for the Church of the Brethren to the National Council of Churches. Ullom received her bachelor of arts from McPherson College with majors in English and Spanish and a minor in English as a Second Language.

• **Dana Weaver** resigned as Annual Conference assistant for the Church of the Brethren, effective July 31, to become operations manager for IMA World Health. She began work with the Annual Conference Office on June 5, 2006, working at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

• **Gabriel Welsch**, assistant vice president of marketing at Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.) since 2007, has been promoted to vice president for advancement and marketing. Welsch will continue to oversee Juniata's marketing efforts, supervise the alumni relations office and development department, and the office of corporate and foundation support.



Roy Winter

*A new home constructed through Brethren disaster relief efforts is dedicated in Haiti.*

## Brethren Service Center ships relief supplies to Haiti projects

Two containers of food and supplies were shipped to help children in Haiti this spring and summer, through the work of Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Material Resources program at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

The container shipments are part of an ongoing disaster relief and rebuilding project of Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti. The shipments support the work of several organizations serving children in Haiti, including the Church of the Brethren mission; SELEEG, an organization of pastors in the city of Gonaives; the Eben-Ezer Mission in Gonaives; and the organization Feed My Starving Children, which supplied the food for the first shipment.

The first shipment arrived in Haiti in April and cleared customs in May. It included nutritionally balanced food packets to use in schools and church programs for children, reported Roy Winter, executive director of Brethren Disaster Ministries. A second shipment in June included medical supplies for the hospital and clinic in Gonaives and canned chicken provided by the Meat Canning Committee of the Church of the Brethren's Southern Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic districts. The distribution in Haiti will be coordinated by mission coordinator Ludovic St. Fleur.

The Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) recently gave a major grant of \$65,000 to continue support for the work in Haiti. Previous grants to this project total \$305,000.

## Brethren Advocacy Days in D.C. will put focus on climate justice

Brethren Advocacy Days is being planned for Sept. 20-21 in Washington, D.C., for Church of the Brethren members and others interested in learning more about advocacy efforts. The theme for the event is "Called to Action: Climate Justice."

Organizers are Church of the Brethren members Jordan Blevins and Wendy Matheny. Blevins works for the National Council of Churches as assistant director of Eco-Justice. The event is being held in con-

junction with the Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships office.

The workshop will start at the NCC's Washington office (110 Maryland Ave. NE) at 3 p.m. on Sept. 20. It will continue through 9 p.m. and resume on Sept. 21, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Registration is \$25. Online registration is available at [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org). There will be a variety of options for housing, but participants will make their own arrangements. For more information, go to <http://brethrenjustice.wordpress.com/> or contact [jblevins@nccusa.org](mailto:jblevins@nccusa.org).

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# 'The Velveteen Rabbit': *Blessed by belief*

*"Jesus said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' "* (Matt. 18:3)

**T**he *Velveteen Rabbit* is a book written by Margery Williams and beautifully illustrated by William Nicholson. Recently made into a movie, it tells the story of a lonely boy who wins over his distant father and stern grandmother, aided by a brave velveteen rabbit whose hope is to become a real rabbit.



TERRY LEWIS

I was introduced to this fascinating story during the fifth decade of my life—my second childhood of sorts. I was midway through my chaplaincy training when we were all asked to read the story for a discussion group during our next class. From my very first reading, the story has captivated me and occupied a very large place in my heart. It is such a moving tale that, upon completion of my training, I have used the

strict grandmother, Nana. Toby plays in the same attic John played in long ago; Nana refers to it as the "Magic Attic."

Toby finds a velveteen rabbit in a box in the attic. When the boys in town make fun of him for not knowing how to play ball, Toby cries—holding the rabbit that he's named Robin. When his tear hits Robin's chest, it burns into his little heart and brings the toy to life. Toby imagines him to life, and Robin becomes his closest friend, playmate, and confidant.

Throughout this marvelously simple and yet complicated story, more and more of the toy animals come to life—including Horse and Swan. And through them and the other characters, life's twists and turns, highs and lows, are beautifully illustrated in metaphors.

The entire story is chock full of metaphors: The attic is heaven. Toby's tears on Robin's heart bring life as Christ's love in our hearts brings life. Toby's deceased mother telling him she is always with him, in his heart, is like Christ's presence with us, if we allow it. The wisdom of Swan, about facing things in our lives that are hard, should ring true for everyone: "Ignoring this won't make it go away." Toby's declaration of love for Robin is like a profession of faith for Christians.

The animated version does a fairly good job of capturing

THROUGHOUT THIS MARVELOUSLY SIMPLE AND YET COMPLICATED STORY, MORE AND MORE OF THE TOY ANIMALS COME TO LIFE. AND THROUGH THEM AND THE OTHER CHARACTERS, **LIFE'S TWISTS AND TURNS, HIGHS AND LOWS, ARE BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED IN METAPHORS.**

story on more than one occasion as my Sunday sermon. This timeless children's story has a message for all ages.

Set in early 20th-century England just before Christmas, the new movie version moves slowly at first. John is Toby's father, and Toby is a young boy; clearly they are from a wealthy family.

A remote, sad John drops off wide-eyed Toby with his

the essence of this classic children's story and is a must-see for children of all ages. This movie will reintroduce the pleasures of a good book to all who see it. **W**

Terry Lewis is a member of Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren and serves on the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board.

## ABOUT THE MOVIE

**Title:** *The Velveteen Rabbit*. **Rating:** G. **Running time:** 97 minutes.

**Released:** Feb. 20, 2009 (limited release). **Director:** Michael Landon Jr.

**Notes:** The movie mixes live-action acting with animated portions.

**DVD:** Available in stores or online; list price \$24.97.

**About the book:** The original book, *The Velveteen Rabbit* (subtitled "Or How Toys Become Real"), was published in 1922. It remains a classic and is widely available.



## ONCAMPUS

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

Jeff Carter, pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren and a Bridgewater alumnus, delivered the message at May 17 baccalaureate service; noted American historian and president of the University of Richmond Edward Ayers delivered the commencement address.

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

Albert Koch, a 1964 Elizabethtown alumnus, was named chief restructuring officer at General Motors as the automaker seeks to emerge from bankruptcy. . . . Elizabethtown has been selected as the host institution for the 2010 NCAA Division III Men's Golf Championships. The four-day event will be held May 11-14, 2010 on the courses of the Hershey (Pa.) Golf Collection.

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

Juniata president Thomas R. Kepple has been named chair of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania for the 2009-2010 academic year. . . . Alumni William Fegan, Donald Robinson (a retired Church of the Brethren pastor), Nate Boggs, George Fattman, and John Bulger received awards during the Alumni Assembly on June 13.

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

Jonathan L. Reed, professor of religion since 1993 and a foremost authority on Mediterranean and early Christian archaeology, has been appointed interim dean of La Verne's College of Arts and Sciences. . . . La Verne ranks No. 2 among private California-based institutions in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanic students, according to US Department of Education data.

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

Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger, a Manchester alumnus, received the college's 2009 Alumni Honor Award on June 4. Peter Michael, Nancy Walker Hoffman, and William Harper also received awards at the banquet.

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

McPherson has received a \$2.7 million gift from the estate of Donna Rose McChesney Allen of DuBois, Pa., to establish The Elsie Whitmer McChesney of Zenda, Kansas, Endowment Fund to educate students in Christian service and to prepare them for a life of Christian ministry and service.



Kay Guyer

## Young Adult Conference explores discipleship

Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa., became a gathering place for 63 young adults to explore "The Journey of Discipleship" during Young Adult Conference (YAC) May 23-25. This theme, inspired by 1 Peter 3:8-15, opened doors for participants to engage in deep discussion of concerns and dreams for their denomination and wider world.

Lively music led by Ben Detrick, Andrew Duffey, Nathan Hollenberg, and Virginia Meadows set the tone as Katie O'Donnell opened the weekend by asking the question, "How do we live and tell our stories according to God's plan?" Feeding from this, Dana Cassell shared her story of service through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). Cassell urged young adults to live in a community of love and service no matter how challenging the situation.

Ethan Gibbel of the national Young Adult Steering Committee reflected, "Young adults are always struggling with issues in the church and the world. Instead of another theme that got in the way of our struggle of discipleship, we dealt directly with the issues on our mind."

Young adults dove into these challenging subjects through workshops centered around their response following the recent closing of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, the task of becoming a "living revolution," and issues surrounding diversity, among other topics.

Greg Davidson Laszakovits, pastor of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, concluded the weekend with vespers and worship by challenging young adults to take risks and find their "God-shaped place" in the world. He also emphasized the power of becoming a witness and the blessings that spring forth from those experiences.

Connecting with the theme of discipleship, an offering of \$240 was collected to support the Brethren Disaster Ministries initiative to build 100 homes in Haiti.

The 2010 Young Adult Conference is planned for Memorial Day weekend at Camp Blue Diamond in Petersburg, Pa.—**Kay Guyer**

Kay Guyer is a member of Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and serves on the National Youth Cabinet.

## BITS AND PIECES

• More than 700 junior and senior high youth, young adults, and advisors took part in one of the **Church of the Brethren workcamps** this past summer. More than 30 workcamps were offered.

 Pontius' Puddle



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- Enten Eller: *Technology and Church Ministry*
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- Stan Dueck: *Six Trends & Micro-Trends Impacting Churches*

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Church of the Brethren

### Will it still be our work?

It's been 25 years since I was on staff at the Washington Office (from 1972 through 1984), so I can be expected to be sad when I learned of the closing of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office in mid-March. I was on staff longer than any other person during the years the office was open.

However, now in my early 80s and receiving retirement benefits from Brethren Benefit Trust, I appreciate what this financial crisis and reduced income is all about, including the church's ability to "emerge from the economic downturn in good shape and with ministries appropriate to the current climate" [MESSENGER, May 2009].

But that doesn't keep me from remembering with gratitude the ministry of all those who worked to give direction and support to the prophetic ministry of the Washington Office for the Church of the Brethren, and the prayerful thought and action that kept its work centered on Annual Conference decisions.

At times their work was controversial, but I recognized that their ministry was valuable to our denomination—always in concert with Annual Conference decisions, even though at times it ran counter to some who felt the church had no calling to speak through government.

However, closing the Washington Office may mean providing some ministries elsewhere in staff responsibilities. Who will speak to these organizations and concerns from the Brethren point of view?

I am not advocating a return to church structure as I experienced it, but I urge a structure that supports what David Radcliff wrote about in his letter to the editor [May]: 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?

*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.*

WHEN MS. FRY-MILLER ASKED US TO "LOOK INTO THE EYES OF A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR WHO IS GAY OR LESBIAN AND SEE JESUS," THIS IS MY HONEST RESPONSE...

**THE PERSON I SEE IS ONE WHO IS IN NEED OF REDEMPTION JUST AS MUCH AS I NEEDED IT.**

I feel a special blessing that I was able to be part of the ministry of the Church of the Brethren Washington Office for those 12-plus years. Hallelujah!

**Louise D. Bowman**  
Bluemont, Va.

### Redemption needed all around

When I first read Kathleen Fry-Miller's letter [May] I reacted negatively to it. I will be honest enough to confess it bothers me that a group is working very hard to try and get the Church of the Brethren to openly welcome and embrace homosexuality. I am one who believes that you would have to do a serious re-write of the Bible to make homosexuality be anything other than what it is: sin. But there was something she said, however, that struck me.

She mentioned Jesus' words about taking the beam out of your own eye first.

Those of us who hold a conservative biblical view at times have been very self-righteous when it comes to this issue. The veins begin to show in our neck as we pound our fist on the table saying, "You're going to hell if you don't repent!" The Fred Phelps approach does nothing but bring shame to the gospel message. Perhaps the beam we need to remove is to be less vitriolic in our speech and a little more compassionate, to demonstrate a little more love and a lot less disgust—all the while, however, not compromising what we believe is biblical truth. And sometimes that can be a difficult path to walk.

To those on the other side of this issue, perhaps the beam you need to remove is to ask yourself this question: What has shaped your personal belief on this issue? Has it been from a serious study of Scripture

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SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA  
and ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)  
PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)  
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE II  
with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)  
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)  
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)  
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE III  
with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)  
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

### OTHER TM TOURS 2010

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ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 6-18)  
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where it addresses the subject of homosexuality specifically? Or has it been shaped by how the world views this issue? The world only views this issue through the lens of equality, civil rights, bigotry, and hatred. And there is nothing wrong with that. But that's where it stops. It does not view this issue through a moral lens.

I realize this is perhaps an irreconcilable issue. When Ms. Fry-Miller asked us to "look into the eyes of a friend or neighbor who is gay or lesbian and see Jesus," this is my honest response to that statement: The person I see is one who is in need of redemption just as much as I needed it.

**Jerry Brenneman**  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

## CLASSIFIEDADS

**Shalom Christian Academy** seeks applications for Administrator, an executive position at a 500 pupil PreK-12 day school in south-central Pennsylvania. Doctorate of Education preferred; Master's degree and administrative experience required. History of lifelong learning and Christian service valued.

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**The Gather 'Round curriculum**, a project of Brethren Press and Mennonite Publishing Network, is **accepting applications to write for the 2011-2012 year**. Writers will be hired for each quarter of the year. All writers will attend an orientation conference in April 2010 and begin writing thereafter. For more information and to submit an application, please visit the job openings page at <http://www.gatherround.org/contactus.html>. Deadline for applications: November 30, 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](mailto:kreiderk@etown.edu).

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## New Members

### Agape, Fort Wayne, Ind.:

Darwin Sievers, Joan Sievers

### Ashland, First, Ashland, Ohio:

Amanda Wilson, Chris Wilson

### Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.:

Reggie Harding, Sharon Lee, Marilyn Barlag, Beth Heironimus

### Beech Run, Mapleton Depot, Pa.:

Robert Banks, Jr., Deanna Banks, Robert Banks, III, Cassandra Banks, Nicholas Banks, Kevin Banks, Emily Harkleroad, Codi Harkleroad, Jacob Shoup, Melissa Winnick, Angela Hatch, Caitlyn Hatch, Mary Bowman

### Big Creek, Cushing, Okla.:

Ryne Cooper

### Charlottesville, Va.:

Alvin Clatterbuck, Jane Clatterbuck, Eric Brittain, Christy Hofecker, John Via

### Clover Creek, Martinsburg, Pa.:

Kevin Albright, Abigail Keith, Matthew Rupp, Erik Stern, Jessica Stanslaw

### Community of Joy, Salisbury, Md.:

Richard Boyd, Rhonda Daley, Martin Hansen, Rose Hansen, Mary Kay Morgan, Cary Oppel, Joanie Silverman, Robert Smith, Theresa Townsend, David Vogel, Carissa Vogel, Walter Townsend, Karen Townsend, Patrick Marvel

### Danville, First, Danville, Va.:

Caleb Lane Berkley

### Drexel Hill, Pa.:

James N. Rhinier

### East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.:

Deb Snavey, Charisse Silva, Amanda Kauffman, Katelyn Hoover, Megan Fahnestock, Joe Gochenauer

### Easton, Md.:

Emerson Tarr, Brenda Yeatman, Howard Yeatman, Donald T. Schatz, Margaret Lee Schatz

### Elizabethtown, Pa.:

Lynette Campbell, Michelle Gray, Harry Ebersole, Jr., Heidi Ebersole, George Keleher, Helen Keleher, Vera Neiss, Trevor Dennehy, Rachel

Engle, Samuel Epps, Nicholas Good, Justin Martin, Owen Musser, Chad Rosenberger, Marie Rhoades, John David Bowman, Sharyn Bowman, Danielle Gonzales, David Longenecker, Karen Longenecker, Kris Strayer, Kenny Burke, Paula Burke, Donna Forbes Steiner, Paul Steiner, Krista Faus

### Fellowship, Martinsburg, W.Va.:

John Nalley, Mischelle Nalley

### Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.:

Brian Alexander, Jacob Alexander, Alan Naylor, Herb Fogleman

### Greenmount, Harrisonburg, Va.:

Maggie Meyers, Reb Meyers, Josh Bolton, Margaret Bolton, Josh Birchfield, Jessica Birchfield, Betsy Vanderwarker, Tim Vanderwarker, Mark Bolton, Janice Bolton, David Weider

### Harrisonburg, First, Harrisonburg, Va.:

Matt Bentel, Laura Copley, Lindsey Laughlin, Jeanie Martin, Michael Overman, Tina Puffenbarger, Jo Ann Soucek, Sandy Soucek, Kevin Tysinger, Mary Beth Tysinger

### Lewiston, Maine:

Aaron Clemmer

### Lititz, Pa.:

Levi Adair, Joshua Charles, Bradley Dussinger, Gaby Spatz, Katelin Timko, Elizabeth Wenger, Jean Dussinger

### Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.:

Matthew S. Bohn, Tyler K. Snyder, Rebecca L. Emerich, Ethan E. Stupp, Aaron S. Riegel, Alexis R. Yenser, Melvin L. Lingle, Jean R. Lingle

### Long Green Valley, Glen Arm, Md.:

Lydia Eze, Tessa Haynes, Emily Henderson, Michael Kagarise, Mitchell Roberts, Sarah Smith

### Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.:

Stacy Applebee, Michael Barringer, Leighann Barringer

### Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.:

Edgar Buckwalter, Elizabeth Buckwalter

### Midway, Lebanon, Pa.:

Blythe Heisey, Shannan Snyder, Chelsey Boehmer, Gabrielle Boehmer, Cody Keller, Mikaila Keller

### Montgomery, Commodore, Pa.:

James Kensingner

### Mount Hermon, Bassett, Va.:

Chester Jefferson, Russell Fulcher

### Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.:

Megan Duffy, Kaitlyn Speece, Shaylin Leiberher, Kirsten Leiberher, Gabrielle Kreiser, Tiffany Heisey, Joe Heisey, Katie Buck, Sarah Fies

### New Enterprise, Pa.:

Jim Milks

### Olivet, Thornville, Ohio:

Heather Shaw, David Shaw, Mackenzie Shaw, Brianna Shaw, Ryan Shaw, Beth Souslin, Larry Souslin, Emily Mullins, Daniel Fuller

### Paxton, Harrisburg, Pa.:

Aaron Prendergast, Tiffany Frehafer

### Purchase Line, Clymer, Pa.:

Phoenix Goss, Brett Lomman, Montanna Rice

### Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa.:

John Trayer, Nancy Hammaker

### Somerset, Pa.:

Ami Miller, Kelly Hoffman, Eric Hoffman

### Troutville, Va.:

Richard Newton, Louise Wampler, Danny Waddell, Nancy Waddell, Michael Waddell, Teresa Carpentieri

### Union Center, Nappanee, Ind.:

Terry Dorn, Rhonda Dorn, Steven Ott, Jim George, Debbie George, Julie Blosser

### Uniontown, Pa.:

Gladys Pluto

### Warrensburg, Mo.:

Phil Miller, Pearl Miller

### Winter Park, Fla.:

David Trowbridge, Pat Trowbridge, Jenifer Torbert, Ben Hamilton, Max Hamilton, Jack Hamilton, Sam Nicole, Sonia Nicole, Joe Flannagin

### Wyomissing, Pa.:

Bruce Reppert, Rosemary Reppert, Karena Cooley, James Harris, Dylan Kaucher, Nathan Kaucher, Zy Knarr, Douglas Kunkle, James Long, Alanna Oese, Dannielle Smith, Samantha Zientek

## Anniversaries

### Alwine, Bernard and Judy,

Mount Joy, Pa., 50

### Basinger, Dale and Evelyn,

Linville, Va., 55

### Blough, Jack and Kay,

Windber, Pa., 50

### Blyer, Rudy and Betty,

Orrtanna, Pa., 50

### Bordona, Bob and Phyllis,

Oakdale, Calif., 50

### Bowman, Jerry and Glenda,

Hampstead, Md., 50

### Bowman, Paul and Sarah,

Bridgewater, Va., 65

### Byers, Jack and Carolyn,

Hanover, Pa., 50

### Clapper, Paul and Gladys,

Holidaysburg, Pa., 70

### Colkitt, Roger and Joanne,

Gettysburg, Pa., 50

### Duncan, Curtis and Rachel,

Mount Morris, Ill., 70

### Fisher, Herb and Helen,

Beverly, Mass., 65

### Gingrich, Walter and Alice,

Ruth, Palmyra, Pa., 60

### Henry, Landy and Peggy,

Bedford, Pa., 50

### Houff, James L. and Mary Z.,

Indianapolis, Ind., 65

### McCrary, Harold and Thelma,

Olathe, Kan., 70

### Michael, Herbert and

Marianne, Hills, Iowa, 65

### Miller, Guy J. and S. Faye,

New Windsor, Md., 50

### Miller, Nelson and Leah,

New Oxford, Pa., 65

### Myers, Bob and Annetta,

Fayetteville, W.Va., 50

### Naff, Elbert Lee and Nancy,

Pilot, Va., 55

### Parker, Jack and Gail,

Kingsport, Tenn., 50

### Proctor, Chester and Lorene,

Lawrence, Kan., 65

### Rankin, James and Shirley,

Warrenton, Va., 55

### Raymer, William and Ruby,

Jacksonville, Fla., 60

### Replogle, James and Carol,

Salisbury, Md., 55

### Shamp, Don and Barb,

Millbury, Ohio, 50

### Shipp, Herman and Mary,

Hagerstown, Md., 60

### Showalter, Marion and Dora,

Empire, Calif., 70

### Simons, Jim and Wava,

Quinter, Kan., 65

### Sloan, John and Marilyn,

Windber, Pa., 50

### Stapelton, Samuel and

Audrey, Enola, Pa., 50

### Wentz, Cletus and Joanne,

Spring Grove, Pa., 50

### Wentz, Dwayne and Grace,

Lititz, Pa., 50

### Wingert, Clarence and Miriam,

Hanover, Pa., 50

## Deaths

### Armbruster, Dorothea, 86, Saint

Petersburg, Fla., May 24

### Baker, Vernon E., 74, Floyd,

Va., June 5

### Ball, Charles E., Sr., 79,

Easton, Md., April 17

### Bumgardner, Gerald, 57,

Mapleton Depot, Pa., Dec. 10

### Bumgardner, Verneta, 100,

Orbisonia, Pa., March 22

### Beckman, L. Lee, 92,

Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 15

### Bowers, Mary M., 97, Troy,

Ohio, Feb. 5

### Breidenbaugh, J. Lewis, 97,

Glen Arm, Md., Feb. 15

### Broadfoot, Doris, 89, Phoenix,

Ariz., May 28

### Brooks, George, 60, Cushing,

Okla., March 10

### Brubaker, Roy, 78, Sinking

Spring, Pa., Jan. 8

### Buohl, Emerson, 91, Lititz,

Pa., April 4

### Callihan, Betty, 85, Ephrata,

Pa., Jan. 8

### Calvert, Jane A., 81,

Morgantown, W.Va., May 1

### Chaney, Connell Thomas, 93,

Grantsville, Md., April 22

### Clapper, John C., 80, New

Enterprise, Pa., June 17

### Cochran, Leslie B., Jr., 74,

Troy, Ohio, June 13

### Colvard, Swanee, 96,

Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 27

### Corle, Hazel, 88, Roaring

Spring, Pa., April 2

### Crowther, Kathryn, 96,

Lancaster, Pa., April 7

### Croyle, Betty Lou, 85,

Johnstown, Pa., May 9

### Dearhart, Marjorie, 92,

Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 22

### Diehl, Nelson M., 86,

Harrisonburg, Va., May 18

### Driskill, Bobbie R., 72,

Longwood, Fla., March 24

### Duncan, Merle, 94, Daleville,

Va., March 25

### Dupler, Clyde S., 88,

Bainbridge, Pa., March 31

### Early, Floyd I., 85, Lima,

Ohio, June 24

### Eby, Carol, 65, Lancaster, Pa.,

May 20

### Enberg, Nels Dwight, 89, La

Verne, Calif., June 27

### Fecher, Sheri Layman, 53,

Elgin, Ill., July 11

### Firebaugh, Esther, 89,

Troutville, Va., Dec. 25

### Flora, Samuel, 89, Quinter,

Kan., April 9

### Frymyer, Minerva, 94,

Stevens, Pa., Feb. 14

### Garber, Effa, 92, Bridgewater,

Va., Dec. 21

### Ginder, Earl B., 91, Manheim,

Pa., June 30

### Grassmyer, Samuel, 72, New

Enterprise, Pa., May 18

### Graybill, Irvin, 79, Troutville,

Va., June 22, 2008

### Green, Harold Perry, 95,

Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 17, 2008

### Gromley, Wilda, 89, Cherry

Tree, Pa., April 1

### Haag, Betty, 78, Plymouth,

Ind., Dec. 7

### Hamilton, Ruth, 86, Lititz,

Pa., June 9

### Hattaway, Thelma, 100,

Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 1

### Hedrick, Allen G., Jr., 64,

Baltimore, Md., May 6

### Heisey, Deborah, 50,

Thompstontown, Pa., June 12

### Huber, Ruth P. Byerly, 95,

Bluffton, Ohio, June 18

### Jenkins, Donald E., 90,

Morgantown, W.Va., May 4

# A wing and a prayer

**I t may sound like the start of a joke:** Two Brethren women walk out of a hospital at 1 a.m. and get into a cab.... This, though, is a true story. And it's the start of a beautiful encounter.

Two of my friends from Maryland made an unexpected trip to a San Diego hospital during Annual Conference after one fell ill, with what was later thought to be the symptoms of Lyme disease. They spent hours at the hospital on Sunday waiting to be seen and have the test results read.



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

Thus it was well after midnight when, with antibiotics in hand, they called a taxi to take them back to the Town & Country Resort, where Annual Conference was being held. They began talking on the return trip, and the driver asked what had brought them to San Diego. They explained that they were there for a church conference.

The driver, originally from Ethiopia, smiled and held up a cross around his neck. "I am a Christian, too!" he said.

As they told him about the day's ordeal, they joked that the worst part was missing the free ice cream night at the conference. He may not have known just how devastating that would be for a Brethren. On hearing it, though, he

that ran for years in Chicago and now is enjoying similar success in New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere. In its signature song, "For Good," one of the characters sings:

"I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we must learn. And we are led to those who help us most to grow if we let them, and we help them in return." The song, sung between two polar opposites who become friends despite all cultural odds, concludes, "Because I knew you I have been changed for good."

As a church, we talk a lot about transformation. It was the theme for the Mission and Ministry Board this past year. It was the theme of the National Junior High Conference in June (see story, p. 16). It was central to this year's Annual Conference theme and its colorful butterfly logo. Moderator David Shumate noted on several occasions the need to shift from "cocoon thinking" to "butterfly thinking."

We wish for transformation on many levels as the church in North America, very much including ours, goes through some challenging times. Perhaps the struggle will strengthen our wings, as it does for the cocoon-wrapped butterfly. Then again, sometimes transformation just isn't going to happen the way we want it. I wonder how many ants and worms—who have their own unique gifts—watch those butterflies and will themselves to sprout wings?

The places where transformation is needed in our church are abundant. Structure, organization, even Annual Conference schedules may need practical change. I sus-

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pulled into a convenience store and told them to get some ice cream—his treat. As they each selected an ice cream sandwich, he insisted they take two, and he paid the cashier.

It seemed only appropriate when he explained to them that his name, in the Ethiopian language, meant "angel."

When they returned to the hotel, they tried to give him a large tip, but he wouldn't accept anything over the norm. They had already given him something wonderful, he explained. Most nights at that hour his fares would be people who were drunk and rude. "Tonight," he said, "I am blessed because I got you."

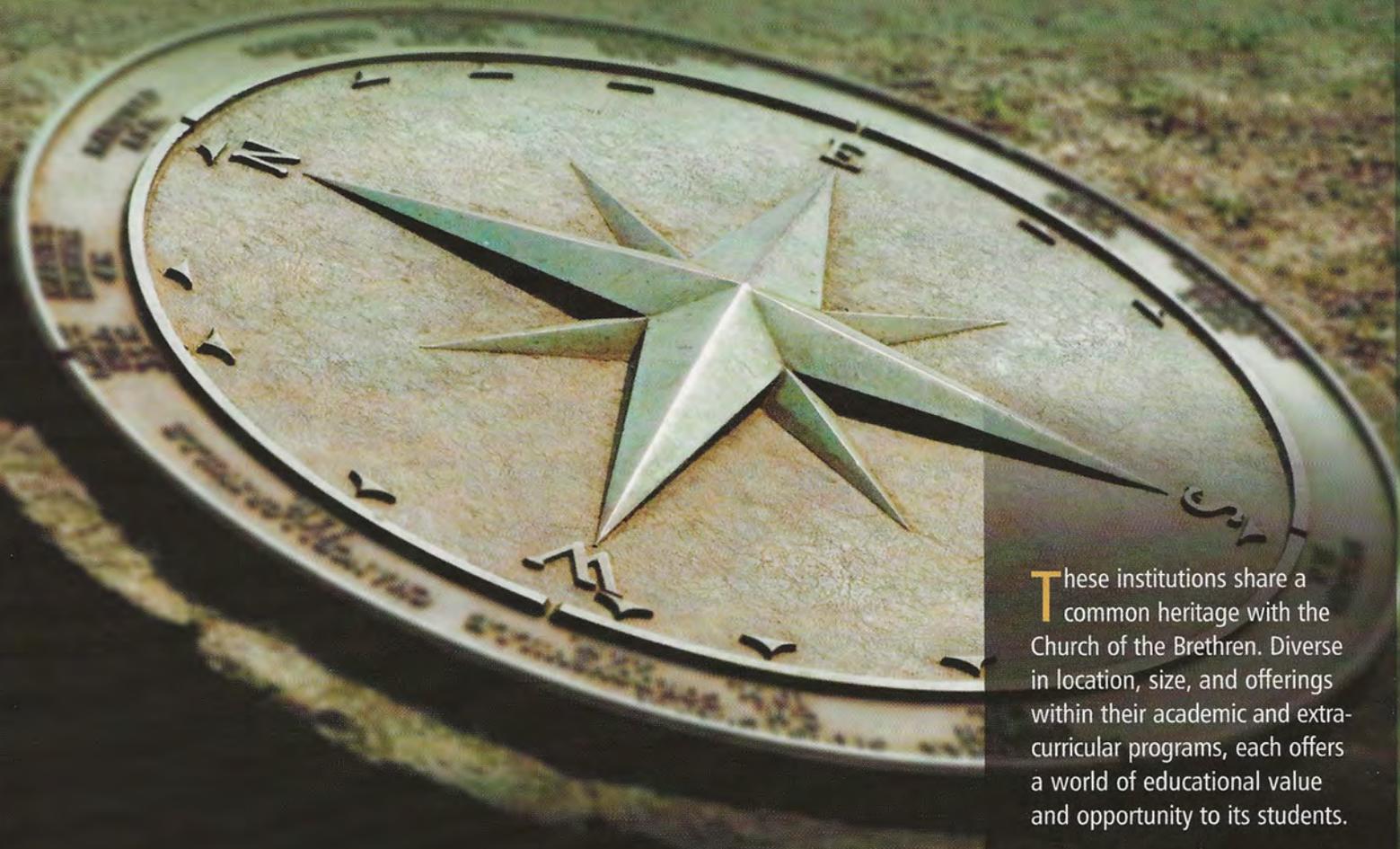
On hearing that story, my thoughts ran to the Broadway musical "Wicked," a sort of prequel to the "Wizard Of Oz"

pect, though, that the greatest need is within our hearts and attitudes. Like the bent-over woman of Luke 13, we need to be able to look up and see the face of Christ in all those around us, whether they are wearing prayer coverings, rainbow scarves, neither, or both. Can our worship together become our main focus rather than our agendas? Can we, like that taxi driver, say to one another, "I am blessed because I got you"?

In his closing blessing in San Diego, newly consecrated 2010 Annual Conference moderator Shawn Flory Replogle said, "God is doing a new thing among us. How will we participate?" If we embrace that challenge, we, too, may soon discover that we've been changed for good.—Ed. 

**COMING IN OCTOBER:** Christian education, justice and the economy, thoughts on love feast, Bible study on the letters of John, book review, and more.

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*Jesus rose from the table, wrapped a towel around himself, and began to wash his disciples' feet, setting an example for all to follow. —Based on John 13*

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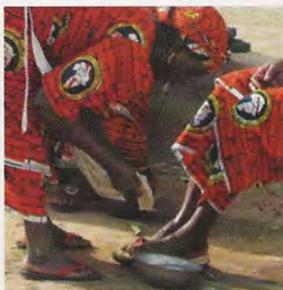
## Siguiendo Su ejemplo...

**Ofrenda para la Misión Mundial 11 de octubre de 2009**

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¡Siguiendo el ejemplo de Jesús de guiar mediante el servicio y el amor compasivo, la Iglesia de los Hermanos comparte el amor de Dios con todo el mundo! Sus donaciones hacen posible que nuestra misión continúe la labor de Jesús.

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