

Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2009 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Sowing seeds in Christian education





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Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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



ONTHECOVER

“Inch by inch, row by row. Gonna make this garden grow. All it takes is a rake and a hoe and a piece of fertile ground.” So began “The Garden Song” by David Mallett. It’s true for a physical garden, and it’s true for the seeds planted through Christian education in congregations everywhere. What tools and materials can insure that good planting and fertile ground continues in our churches?

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David Radcliff



8 Still sowing seeds

Christian education faces many challenges, yet it remains a regular part of most congregations—and an important part. Angie Mountain explores the dynamics involved in this ministry, and some ways churches can continue to make it vital in the 21st century.

12 The up side of down

It’s all over the headlines: a rough economy, difficult times for the church, a critical time for the environment, and more. David Radcliff suggests that our current crises, while hard, can prompt us to some healthy re-evaluation on all fronts.

16 Traveling on the same bumpy road

Ben Barlow was among a small Brethren delegation that traveled to Nigeria for a “youth” conference this past spring. The trip sparked reflections on mission, faith, and the ways we are church together.

19 Posture preaches

Many things that we do send a message; washing feet is no exception.

20 1, 2, & 3 John: Love letters and lovers’ quarrels

Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm reviews these three short epistles that appear near the end of the New Testament. They describe God’s love, and in that context address some deep divisions in the church.

We still have a church magazine. That is no small matter nowadays; much larger denominations have thrown in the towel. The latest sad news comes from the United Church of Christ, which had to discontinue the *United Church News*. In June it was the Reformed Church of America's *Church Herald*.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

MESSENGER faces the same pressures that many church magazines are facing—rising costs for paper and postage coupled with a slow decline in subscriptions and the attraction of other media. But we're not in dire straits. In fact, comparing subscriptions to church membership, we have one of the highest penetration rates of the denominational magazines with whom we share figures. We have loyal subscribers, and we're grateful for that.

We do need to make a change, though. In order to stay ahead of the game and keep our finances ship-shape, we're going to combine the January and February issues, resulting in 10 issues a year. This seems preferable to a rate increase. Even though it's been four years since we last made that financial decision, now doesn't seem like a good time to raise rates.

The last time we reduced the number of issues was in 1986, when a financial crunch required us to shift to 11 issues. Lately we've managed to keep the budget balanced through efficient printing, strong advertisers, occasional rate increases, and, most notably, a very lean staff. MESSENGER has only one full-time staff person, editor Walt Wiltschek. Part-timer Diane Stroyeck handles subscriptions. Other vital contributions are made by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, Jean Clements, and Karen Stocking.

No small share of the credit for the magazine's stability and health goes to Walt, who is as facile with numbers as he is with words, has a knack for making a story connect the local and the denominational, and travels widely as a popular speaker and presenter.

This past summer he was honored by Manchester College as the first non-alum to receive the school's Church-College Service Award. Why did they choose him? Walt is "astute in finding stories of faith, service, and compassion," they said. "Sometimes he finds those stories at Manchester College. More often, his stories are about compassionate young Brethren who also happen to be students at Manchester College." The college went on to cite the many places you see him—conferences, committee meetings, disaster sites, regional youth conferences, youth camps. In other words, he's all over the place finding those stories of faith, and college leaders noticed how Manchester and the other Brethren colleges benefited from his attention.

Congratulations to Walt for this honor. Under his stewardship, MESSENGER is not only telling the church's story but also actively building up the community of faith.

Wendy McFadden

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Subscription rates:

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

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

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

Visit MESSENGER online at www.brethren.org/messenger.

A free study guide for each issue of MESSENGER is available at this site, along with other information.

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

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 10 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

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



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

Grow and do likewise

Modesto's garden produces more than just produce

As Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren moves forward into ministry, we hoped to use a "side door" to allow community members and those from our congregation to

meet outside the church and both within their comfort zones, as well as to provide them with some instant common ground to discuss. What better way to utilize our empty back lot than as a community garden?



Modesto Church of the Brethren has seen a bountiful harvest, literally and figuratively, from its new community garden.

The most obvious common ground for us was

actual ground. A small committee met to discuss the do's and don'ts of gardening, water costs, timelines, and growing more than just flowers and food. The details were finally set into motion in April when the congregation worked all weekend to lay pipe for numerous garden spigots. On Easter Sunday, the community garden opened up, and six plots were already reserved.

As months have passed, we have more community members growing things in our garden than congregation members! The church members frequently say hello to the gardeners to discuss the "common ground" of what's growing in the neighborhood. As sunflowers bloom, corn comes past eye level, and tomatoes begin to turn red, we can definitely say that that the garden has provided, and it will continue to do so.

The garden is now more than half rented. It includes community and church members, friends of friends, a local school, use in our Vacation Bible School, and even has disabled adults coming to learn as they grow. More and more people are asking what to do with the overproduction of food, which provides an opportunity to share with them other ways that we are active in the area.

We have a few community members who simply want to help others in the garden and are in contact weekly. The garden has truly become an area of growth. It has grown interest, discussion, relationships, neighbors, information, exchange of the church's values, and, most importantly, love. We only hope to be able to watch it continue to grow for harvests to come.—Leah Knipe

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.

Northeast The "Footprints" regional conference for youth in Pennsylvania and the Northeast will be held Nov. 20-21 in Chambersburg, Pa. . . . Berkey Church of the Brethren (Windber, Pa.) held its 50th annual strawberry festival on June 20. . . . A team of five volunteers from Children's Disaster Services responded to flooding in Silver Creek and Gowanda, N.Y., in mid-August. . . . General secretary Stan Noffsinger spoke at Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren's "Picnic in the Park" event on Sept. 12.

Southeast A production of "The Final Journey of John Kline" Oct. 10 at Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren will benefit an effort to preserve the 1822 John Kline Homestead in Broadway, Va. . . . Bridgewater College's Interdistrict Youth Cabinet will lead the Southeastern District fall youth retreat Oct. 23-25 at Jackson Park Church of the Brethren (Jonesborough, Tenn.). . . . Jim Hardenbrook was the keynote speaker for this year's Southeastern District conference.

Midwest The sale of the property of Eagle Creek Church of the Brethren in Forest, Ohio, which was officially disorganized this summer, raised nearly \$500,000 that has benefited numerous district and denominational projects, as well as other ministries. . . . Rockford (Ill.) Church of the Brethren reported it is selling its property and seeking a new location and mission to continue its fellowship as a Church of the Brethren.

Ozarks/Plains A wind and hail storm struck Camp Pine Lake (Eldora, Iowa) on Aug. 9, destroying several trees and causing damage to buildings and vehicles. A re-roofing project is ongoing this fall. . . The Western Plains District office has moved to the Miller Library on the campus of McPherson (Kan.) College. . . Northern Plains' district auction raised more than \$4,000 for district ministries and disaster relief efforts; also at district conference, fellowship status was approved for the Common Spirit Project in Minneapolis.

West A workshop on "Growing the Role of Deacons" was held Sept. 26 at Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren. . . A fundraiser dinner/auction for Camp Wilbur Stover took place Sept. 19 at Mountain View Church of the Brethren in Boise. . . Olympia, Lacey (Wash.) Community Church of the Brethren this year has provided food resources for the hungry "that weigh more than the combined weight of the congregation"—well over three tons, according to the church newsletter.

YOU SAID IT

"The need continues to be great for economic opportunity around the world."

—SERRV president Bob Chase, speaking to the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board about his organization's work in fair trade. SERRV celebrated its 60th anniversary this fall.

BY THE NUMBERS

32

Number of new students enrolled at Bethany Theological Seminary this fall, including 28 in degree programs. It was Bethany's largest incoming class in more than a decade.

Garden City church gathers backpacks full of blessings

Garden City (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, through its witness commission and with the help of members and friends, donated 55 backpacks of school supplies for students to the Family



Diane Crockett

Crisis Center in Garden City. Ashley Crockett oversaw the project.

Before delivery of the school supplies, we gathered the backpacks at the front of the sanctuary on Sunday morning and prayed over them for the children receiving these gifts.

A large amount of supplies left over from filling backpacks was given to the local Salvation Army.—**Ruth Sauer**

Congregations provide gift of simple interfaith support

“Continuing the Work of Jesus. Simply. Peacefully. Together” became a living witness in Berks County, Pa., last year. As Wyomissing Church of the Brethren began the demolition of its building in order to construct a new facility, a nine-month period without a place of worship became the centerpiece of their transition.

Public testimony of interfaith cooperation was proclaimed when the Brethren congregation was welcomed as resident guests of their neighboring Reform

Members of Garden City Church of the Brethren gathered a bevy of backpacks for area schoolchildren in need.

Synagogue, Temple Oheb Sholom. The Jewish community provided space for two office areas as well as use of their sanctuary, social hall, and classrooms.

From June 27, 2008, to April 5, 2009, the Brethren worshipped and met in the synagogue as everyone watched the new construction taking place across the street. Inquiring about the church’s transitional life without its own building, everyone was amazed and touched by this story of interfaith relationship.

The roots of this relationship, however, run much deeper than this demonstration of space-sharing. Ten years earlier, while the synagogue was renovating its newly acquired property next to the church, their Friday evening Shabbat services were conducted in the Church of the Brethren sanctuary for an entire summer.

The congregations’ leaders, Tim Speicher and Rabbi Brian Michelson, assumed their roles in the 1990s. Their predecessors, Don Robinson and Rabbi Allen Weitzman, had also served concurrently for 30 years.

In the wake of 9/11 in 2001, the congregations held a cooperative prayer service for the wider community’s expression of grief and pain. When anti-Semitic graffiti was applied to the synagogue’s renova-

LANDMARKS

- **Mary Carter Robinson**, a member of Coulson Church of the Brethren (Hillsville, Va.) passed away on June 2, hours before her 100th birthday. She served many years as a deacon and Sunday school teacher and had been church treasurer, a church board member, delegate to district conference and Annual Conference, and MESSENGER representative. She was able to celebrate the near-century during a party held at the church on May 31.

- **Claire Mock** celebrated his 104th birthday on July 25 with a motorcycle ride. He attends Bedford (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

- **Lucile Wales**, a resident of Pinecrest Manor in Mount Morris, Ill., celebrated her 100th birthday on Sept. 14.

- At Annual Conference this summer, Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) presented its 2009 OMA Staff of the Year Award to **Bob Patalano**, outgoing director of Inspiration Hills in Northern Ohio District. The 2009 OMA Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to **Leroy Lapp** of Camp La Verne and posthumously to **Lloyd Lapp** of Camp La Verne.

- **Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren** (South Bend, Ind.) on Sept. 13 celebrated its 50th anniversary, along with pastor David Hendricks’ 30th year as an ordained minister. The day included a worship service led by Seth Hendricks and Steve Schweitzer, the opening of a 25th-anniversary time capsule, music, a drama, an “old-fashioned” meal, and fellowship time.

- **Duncan Chapel Church of the Brethren** (Willis, Va.) celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sept. 13 with two worship

services, lunch, and a review of the congregation’s history.

- **Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren interim pastor Thom Guthrie** was featured in a recent MSNBC article on taking on new challenges in retirement. Guthrie, nearing his 70th birthday, was a teacher, school administrator, and property manager before deciding to enter ministry. “When you work, you’re forced to keep moving,” Guthrie said. I’m pushing 70 and I’m looking for 80 or 90.”

- **Bedford (Pa.) Church of the Brethren** will mark its 50th anniversary on Oct. 10 with an evening celebration.

- **Bethel Church of the Brethren** (Arrington, Va.) celebrated its 100th anniversary on Sept. 20; Collinsville (Va.) Church of the Brethren celebrated its 50th anniversary the same day.

- **Oak Grove-South Church of the Brethren** (Rocky Mount, Va.) planned to dedicate its new addition on Sept. 27.

- **York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren** is celebrating its 125th anniversary this fall. Guest speakers at special worship services include well known author and preacher Tony Campolo and MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek.

- **Camp Bethel** (Fincastle, Va.) was scheduled to hold its 25th Heritage Day Festival on Oct. 3.

- **Bread for the World**, a partner of the Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund, is celebrating its 35th anniversary. Bread founder Art Simon is promoting the anniversary with a nationwide tour for his new book, *The Rising of the Bread for the World: An Outcry of Citizens Against Hunger*.

tion walls, balloons from the Brethren's 100th anniversary graced the Jewish property as the area's annual Memorial Day parade made its way along the street between the congregations.

The joy of cooperation has been reinforced over the years by pulpit-supply exchange. The rabbis have been welcomed each Annual Conference Sunday as they spoke of Jewish background and understandings. The Brethren pastors have also been embraced in the proclamation of living as God's people in today's world.—**Tim Speicher**

Poages Mill projects raise a boatload of money for Heifer

Poages Mill Church of the Brethren (Roanoke, Va.) gave \$5,270 to Heifer



Alice Stevens

A boat bearing Christ across the sea decorates the wall for Poages Mill's Vacation Bible School, which raised money to help fill a Heifer "ark."

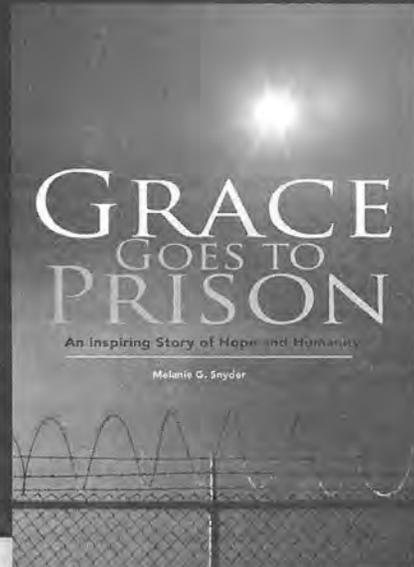
International this year, enough to buy a "Gift Ark" of animals plus a water buffalo and a flock of chicks.

This was a Sunday school project and a Vacation Bible School (VBS) project for the congregation. The Sunday school classes gave \$2,627.29, VBS had

an offering of \$920.65, and the congregation donated \$1,722.06.

We had a great time raising the money for hunger relief. When the article came out in MESSENGER (July/August issue) that Heifer International was 65 years old this year, it made it more important that we were able to send money. In 1946 our church also had three young men (Howard Henry, H.L. Grisso, and Elmer Nienke) go as "seagoing cowboys"—a great accomplishment for our small church.—**Alice Stevens**

FOLLOW THIS QUIET WOMAN'S QUEST TO TEAR DOWN WALLS OF MISTRUST AND BRING RESPECT AND HUMANITY TO PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PRISON BARS.



An Inspiring Story of Hope and Humanity

In 1975, a 37 year-old Brethren homemaker named Marie Hamilton started visiting prison inmates with one simple idea: to look for and affirm the good in them. Her vision challenged conventional thinking, she had no formal education in criminal justice, yet her programs have become an integral part of Pennsylvania's prison system, touching the lives of thousands.



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The Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies congratulates

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The Origin of the Schwarzenau Brethren
Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 2008

"Meier has provided researchers with a wealth of new information about the people, movements, and ideas that helped shape the mind of the early Brethren."
—Dale R. Stoffer, academic dean, Ashland Theological Seminary

Join us for Marcus Meier's public lecture at the Young Center on October 29, 2009.

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Seeking the gift of unity

What does it mean to be church? What does it mean to make manifest the body of Christ in this world? This may be the ultimate question facing us today as members of the Church of the Brethren. Our church



JORDAN BLEVINS

is shrinking, the Brethren Witness/Washington Office has closed, and we are entering a denomination-wide conversation on human sexuality. What does it mean for us to be church with one another? What would it mean for us to realize our unity in Christ?

These are questions that have followed me, and been a part of conversations I have been having over the past year with various groups of

young adults. In the ecumenical world, a gathering of young adults before the 2008 General Assembly of the National Council of Churches and Church World Service declared, "We understand that our present unity in Christ is not the end goal, but the beginning of engagement with the world. We have a

tual discernment, and social engagement. We acknowledge that even within this small group of young adults, there are many different ways of viewing scripture, spiritual discernment, and social engagement, but we are committed to seeking the mind of Christ together" (<http://alreadyandnotyet.wordpress.com/2009/02/18/forum-minute/>).

This is what being the church with one another, in relationship, is all about: transforming our current reality so that it is a better reflection of the Body of Christ. Of living together, walking together, and being a community of believers together.

Jurgen Moltmann, a German theologian, writes in *The Way of Jesus Christ*, "The church exists in contradictions and conflicts, and it must organize itself as the visible community of believers against the impeachments of this world of violence, so that it may show the world God's alternatives." As such, these young adults are not only about calling the church together in relationship, but also about showing that Godly alternative to the world. It's a call for the entire church to be a part of.

In light of the closing of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, we think it is important that we continue to be a pres-

THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THAT OUR CALL TO BE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER IS NOT THE END GOAL BUT THE GIFT OF OUR UNITY WITH ONE ANOTHER IN JESUS CHRIST, AND THAT OUR CALL AS A CHURCH IS TO LIVE OUT THAT REALITY.

deep commitment to conversations and relationships with our fellow Christians, including those with whom we most deeply disagree, and those who have not yet been part of our conversation" (www.faithconnectsus.org/fileadmin/templates/faith-connects/documents/new-fire-statement-2008.pdf).

This is a group of people who understand the root of being church—of being in relationship with one another. These are people who understand that our call to be in relationship with one another is not the end goal but the gift of our unity with one another in Jesus Christ, and that our call as a church is to live out that reality.

In December 2008, I was with a group of Church of the Brethren young adults in Carefree, Ariz., who said, "We understand that many of us are frustrated with the current state of leadership and/or organization within the church, but we find hope, light, and energy in the midst of that frustration. We recognize that the Body of Christ is in constant incarnational transformation. We hope for the transformation from 'church' into a community of disciples and disciple-makers. We long for the church to be 'Brethren' at its best, based in scripture, spiri-

ence and raise that alternative voice for the "Powers That Be" in Washington, D.C., and witness to the beliefs that we hold. Brethren need to learn about the issues and tell Congress what we believe. (See <http://brethrenjustice.wordpress.com> for more information.)

Walter Brueggeman offers these words of prayer: "We are, on most days, a hard mix of true prophet and wayward voice, a mix of your call to justice and our hope for shalom. Here we are, as we are, mixed but faithful, compromised but committed, anxious but devoted to you. Use us and our gifts for your newness that pushes beyond all that we can say or imagine." Amen.

As we struggle to figure out what it means today to be church—to live in relationship with our God and with each other, and what it looks like to live that out—let us continue to have those words as our present reality. May we continue seeking a world we can't imagine, and calling that world into being. **AMEN**

Jordan Blevins is assistant director of Eco-Justice Programs and Coordinator of Poverty Initiatives and Washington Internships for the National Council of Churches in Washington, D.C. He serves on the Young Adult Steering Committee for the Church of the Brethren, and the board of directors of On Earth Peace.

QUOTE WORTHY

“World hunger is the biggest obscenity of our age.”

—the Rev. Ray Buchanan, founder of Stop Hunger Now. He was quoted in the *United Methodist Reporter*.

“Conversation is the glue that holds us together as a church family. Without it we perish.”

—the Rev. Louis Lotz, pastoral leader of Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was writing in *The Church Herald of the Reformed Church in America*.

“Our differences—in culture, language, religion, appearance—are an enormous gift! God made us different in the hope that our hearts might expand beyond what is familiar.”

—the Rev. Dr. Jim Atnal, president of the United Church of Christ Massachusetts Conference. He was speaking at a Refugee Immigration Ministry benefit dinner in Boston and was quoted in Church World Service’s “Welcome” newsletter

“Without a doubt, attending Annual Conference is a major financial commitment. But the benefits, I believe, far outweigh the costs. I consider what I receive from Annual Conference to be priceless, a gift from God.”

—Illinois/Wisconsin District executive Kevin Kessler, writing in the district newsletter

“Size isn’t really part of the equation; impact is what matters to us.”

—Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) president Jo Young Switzer, speaking at the college’s Annual Conference dinner about the joys of being small

“The things which once were are being replaced by new things. We stand in the doorway of this changing reality, still unclear about the possibilities.... Our world doesn’t stay the same. The question is, will we?”

—Seattle Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren pastor Ken Rieman, writing about “liminality” and the church in the Church of the Brethren Women’s Caucus newsletter

“We cannot make any sense out of death; sense is discovered in life, and in how that life was/is lived.”

—Randy Naylor, general secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication, writing in his Easter message. He was paraphrasing the words of the pastor at a funeral he recently attended.

CULTUREVIEW

• Delegates at the 2009 Mennonite Church USA Convention unanimously adopted a **“Statement Against Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery.”** Some speakers noted that the underlying economic problems driving this issue must be addressed.

• The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America voted in June to conclude the ministry of its denominational magazine, the **Church Herald**. The magazine published its final issue in September.

• First Lutheran Church of Milford, Iowa, offers the **“Nation’s Oldest Outdoor Worship Service”** each summer—a unique drive-in service that has been running since 1949. The service, now held in a field behind the church after beginning at a drive-in theater, averages 150 to 160 vehicles per week. (*The Lutheran*)

• The **Concordia Historical Institute Museum**, a state-of-the-art learning facility dedicated to “preserving the history and celebrating the heritage of Lutheranism in America,” opened to the public July 27 at the Lutheran Church-Missouri

Synod’s International Center in Kirkwood, Mo.

• Many faith leaders applauded Congress for its action in June approving landmark legislation authorizing the Food and Drug Administration to **regulate tobacco products**. The FDA for the first time will be able to regulate the manufacture, promotion, and sale of cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and similar products.

• According to a study from Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion, people surveyed said they thought “half or more” of the following **will get into heaven**: average Americans, 54 percent; Christians, 72 percent; Jews, 46 percent; Buddhists, 37 percent; Muslims, 34 percent; nonreligious people: 29 percent.

• Mennonite Publishing Network’s Herald Press is exploring a new genre with the title **Pax Avalon: Conflict/Revolution**. Written and illustrated by Steven “Reece” Friesen, it is the **first graphic novel** (full-length comic) released by a Mennonite publisher. The graphic novel challenges readers to live a life of peace, according to a release.



JUST FOR FUN: SCRAMBLE

This month’s issue looks at Christian education in the church, not long after many children and youth headed back to school for a new year. Unscramble these 10 words related to school and the classroom (answers printed below):

EARCHET

NOSELSS

SKOBO

NUTSSTED

MUULURCIRC

HMOOKREW

DUSTY

SLEPNIC

KESSD

DENTAACENT

ANSWERS: Teacher, lessons, books, students, curriculum, homework, study, pencils, desks, attendance.



by Angie Mountain

Still sowing seeds

Christian education faces challenges but remains a vital ministry

American author Mark Twain is rumored to have scoffed at the rumors of his death, calling them “exaggerated.”

Although no one has—as yet—put a fork in Christian education, rumblings of its demise, or at least its decline, have been circulating for decades. Assign the blame where you will—technology, declining church membership, the media, the increasingly secular nature of our society, an aging population within the church—but church leaders across denominational and, indeed, international boundaries have struggled to find a successful formula for Christian education in the 21st century. And yet, Sunday school lives on in the majority of our congregations. Community members still send their children to Vacation Bible School. Bible studies, youth groups, and after-school programs continue.

The numbers tell one side of the story, and they all too often paint a grim reality. But don't get out the forks just yet. The death of Christian education, though oft predicted, has yet to come to pass.

What is Christian education?

One way to look at Christian education is through the lens of the parable Jesus told about the sower whose seeds fell on the path, among the weeds, on rocky ground, and on fertile soil.

It's true that some of what we try to teach in the church just isn't going to reach its audience, and some of what's taught will be choked out by all of the other demands made on the learners' time and attention.

But if no one bothers to spread the seeds of the Good News in the first place, how will any of them ever reach the good soil where they can take root, flourish, and grow?

A strong, vibrant Sunday school program is a wonderful asset to a congregation, but it doesn't have to be the only source of Christian education. Whether we like it or not, churches are no longer the only game in town on Sundays. Working parents use the weekends to catch up on chores and errands, and sports leagues schedule practices and games on Sunday mornings.

With Sundays suddenly more crowded with other options, churches are reaching out with midweek

DID YOU KNOW?

According to statistics in the *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*, published by Brethren Press, congregations in 2008 reported an average weekly Christian education attendance of 28,456. Total membership was reported at 124,408, and average weekly worship attendance at 59,084.

Children gather for Christian education classes at Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va.

courtesy of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren



ONE WAY TO LOOK AT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE **PARABLE JESUS TOLD ABOUT THE SOWER** WHOSE SEEDS FELL ON THE PATH, AMONG THE WEEDS, ON ROCKY GROUND, AND ON FERTILE SOIL.

programs, including youth groups, Bible studies, prayer circles, and after-school programs. Community outreach efforts include nursery schools and Vacation Bible Schools, resources are made available for families in their homes, and camps and outdoor ministries play a part, as well.

Who's doing the teaching?

Good leaders in a Christian education program make a world of difference. In larger congregations, paid staff often are in charge of overseeing the programs, but churches of every size still need volunteers to make the vision become a reality.

How are churches calling their teachers? Are we truly trying to discern who has a gift for teaching? Are we offering adequate training to volunteers once they have been called? Or are we simply filling open slots with the first warm body we can convince to take the job?

In most congregations, it's a combination of both. Of course we want the most qualified teachers in our programs. And there's an effort to find those people with an interest in and a talent for teaching when we look to fill positions.

But when it comes right down to it, if we need a Sunday school teacher, or a youth leader, or a Vacation Bible School director, there's seldom a queue of volunteers lining up for the positions.

"We're not careless," says R. Kurt Borgmann, senior

pastor of Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind. "But we're sometimes a bit casual."

Manchester asks its members to complete a survey about their gifts, and there is an effort to match people's interests to the tasks they are requested to undertake. Teachers often work in teams, and new volunteers are usually asked to serve as helpers first before taking on teaching duties.

Still, in most congregations there is little, if any, formal training offered to members serving in Christian education. You may need to fill out forms for child abuse clearances and criminal background checks before working with children and youth, but that's often the extent of the requirements.

There's nothing wrong with learning ecumenically from resource centers developed from denominations like Mennonite Church USA and the United Church of Christ, says Elizabethtown (Pa.) College director of church relations Donna Steiner, a former minister of Christian education. But we've relied on those other denominations for teacher training instead of developing programs within the Church of the Brethren. Shortages of both staff and money limit the options, but there are creative ways to address the issue.

"What I'd like to see," says Steiner, "is a cluster of congregations in an area go together and ask capable, trained leaders to come in and conduct workshops. People don't like to travel for training, but congregations can bring leadership in to provide the training."



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EQUIPS THE CHURCH TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE. IT HELPS MEMBERS BUILD STRONG PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHRIST AND HELPS BRING NEW PEOPLE INTO THE FELLOWSHIP.

A place for technology

Perhaps nowhere does our culture change more rapidly than in the realm of technology. In the 1970s, church leaders from a variety of denominations began pondering the role television was playing on learning styles and the effectiveness of Sunday school curricula. Today's younger students know nothing of life before the creation of the Internet, a technological advance with the potential to change educational standards in ways that dwarf the effects of television.

In a 1977 article published in *Direction*, a journal of the Brethren Mennonite church, Loyal J. Martin writes about the disconnect between the writers of Christian education materials, most of whom were born in the 1940s and 50s, and the consumers of the materials. An entire generation of Americans had been raised with television, and students became accustomed to visual learning methods. Christian educators still relied mainly on verbal methods of communication, and congregations struggled to bridge the divide.

The gap did narrow, of course, and Christian education materials today provide a variety of activities designed to appeal to a wide range of learning styles—not just the verbal and visual, but also for the more physical and tactile children in our congregations. Adult groups also took the plunge. Movie discussion groups, lessons on DVDs, and opportunities to learn through the creative arts are



Youth at Camp Peaceful Pines in Dardanelle, Calif., do journaling and other activities as part of Bible study.

being offered at churches on a regular basis.

Our new challenge is the Internet generation. Today's children, teens, and young adults get their information from websites, blogs, "tweets," e-mails, social networking sites, text messages—the sheer volume of available sources can set your head spinning.

Online support and activities for Christian education programs are increasing, although you still won't find computers in most Sunday school classrooms. References abound on the Internet, and a Google search will give teachers a vast array of free coloring pages, puzzles, crafts, songs, and stories to supplement the regular curriculum.

"The Internet has affected all ages," says Jennifer Kreighbaum, pastor of discipleship ministries at Spring Creek Church of the Brethren in Hershey, Pa. "The older generation is also falling into the pathway of the Internet. Numerous folks in their 30s, 40s, and 50s at least use computers in the workplace."

Teaching Christians to think

The downside to this ready access to such a rich offering of information is sorting through what is accurate, trustworthy, useful, and appropriate. As I find myself telling my own children more and more frequently, "Just because you read it online doesn't make it true."

This is one place where volunteer training could make positive inroads. Leaders need to know how to balance fun activities and more serious study. They need to discern how to use resources from the Internet to supplement Bible passages and denominational materials, not to replace them. Memorizing information is no longer enough. We need to teach people how to sift through information and make good decisions, and we can't teach people those skills without training our leaders first.

"We must help learners in the church to think, and present them with something worth thinking about," says John M. Hall in his 2003 article for the World Council of Churches, "Some Guidelines for the Future Development of Christian Education."

Borgmann puts it a little differently.

"We need better biblical literacy," he says. "You can go through the experience of Sunday school in the

LEARN MORE

For more information about *Gather 'Round* curriculum, visit www.gatherround.org. For information on other curriculum published by Brethren Press, visit www.brethrenpress.com, or call 800-441-3712.

church, and I'm not convinced you will necessarily have a whole sense of the biblical story, how it fits together, and how it relates to the faith.

"We need to integrate thinking and believing. They're two parts of one whole."

Finding the right materials

Despite the denomination's relatively small size, the Church of the Brethren continues to produce materials for Christian education that reflect the values and beliefs of the church. Working with the Mennonite Publishing Network, Brethren Press moved about three years ago from the *Jubilee* children's curriculum to *Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News*.

"As an educator, I value a plan," says Pam Reist, a pastor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren who served on the advisory committee for *Gather 'Round*. "And a curriculum provides an overall structure that's not there with a piecemeal approach."

Gather 'Round familiarizes children with the Bible, promotes a personal relationship with a loving God, and lifts up Anabaptist values like peacemaking and service. In November 2008, representatives from both denominations met with *Gather 'Round* staff and other publishing house employees assigned to the project to discuss the current and future needs of the curriculum.

On the positive side, according to a survey of Mennonite and Church of the Brethren congregations in North America, a high percentage of congregations are using curricula provided by the denomination. Other congregations are using the *Gather 'Round* materials, as well, including denominations like the United Church of Christ and the Mennonite Brethren.

Among the challenges faced by the denomination, however, is the number of congregations with few or no children attending. According to a Brethren Press survey of Church of the Brethren congregations (230 of 1,006 responded, representing every district in the United States), only 16 percent described their Sunday school attendance as growing, and just 81 percent have a children's Sunday school program. Almost a quarter of the 230 congregations said their Sunday school attendance is declining.

To deal with these changes, *Gather 'Round* staff are attempting to make the curriculum more flexible for use with youth groups or retreats, in addition to making them more appealing to adults. Other Brethren/Anabaptist resources are available to congregations, including the *Generation Why* series for youth, the quarterly *A Guide to Biblical Studies*, the *Second Mile* and *Covenant Bible* series, and more. But declining membership means the publishing houses have to find new ways to make their materials appeal to broader audiences or lose the ability to create unique resources that speak directly to the denomination's core belief system.

Are we committed?

Ask any church member if they think Christian education is important, and there's an excellent chance the answer

will be yes. But ask who is responsible for Christian education, and the answer is not so easy to come by.

Is it the denomination's responsibility to blaze the trail? Should pastors make it their priority? Does it fall on the shoulders of the youth leader, the nurture commission chair, or even the deacons? Who will step forward and own the job?

There's a part for each of us to play. For parents, that role may include making sure children have the opportunity to participate in the Christian education offerings of the congregation, showing appreciation for the time and talents of leaders, and following up at home. Teachers have a responsibility to be good learners in their own right: to take advantage of training and resources that will make them better nurturers and guides for their students.

The local congregation's leadership shares the assignment of providing training and resources—as well as ongoing active support—for those willing to teach. Church leaders need to seek out and discern the gifts of those who will become teachers in the future and nurture those gifts.

At the denominational level, creating appropriate resources that fit the budgets and spiritual needs of the congregations is imperative, as well as creating a medium through which creative, inspirational ideas can be dispersed to others throughout the wider church.

Christian education equips the church to meet the challenges of the future. It helps members build strong personal relationships with Christ and helps bring new people into the fellowship. And the groups through which Christian education is accomplished serve as important sub-groups within the larger church. Providing peer support and interaction, these smaller social groups help knit together the community as a whole.

Overall, says Steiner, you want Christian education to be very relational. The New Testament is, after all, a relational message.

Reist affirmed that aspect of Christian education, however that ministry of the church is carried out.

"The beauty of Christian education is the relationships that are formed," she says. "That's eternal. That will never change. And that's where the real impact lies." ❧

courtesy of Gather 'Round



Angie Mountain has more than 20 years experience as a camp counselor, a youth group director, and a teacher for children's church, Sunday school, and Vacation Bible School in the Church of the Brethren. She currently co-teaches the senior high youth Sunday school class at Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

story and photos by David Radcliff

Upside of down

Our current crises can prompt healthy re-evaluation

The up

Asked if her wage was fair and the treatment she received decent, "No" replied Fatima with a look of resignation so often on the face of women around the world. "It's barely enough to feed my family and keep my children in school. But do we have a choice? It's the only work we have."



During a nighttime stroll up the small valley between the saguaro-dotted hillsides, it's not unusual to hear owls calling from the ridge line or catch sight of one gliding silently overhead. Coyote pups occasionally yelp from their distant hideaway. Other night sounds present themselves (some sounding suspiciously like a small creature having encountered an owl), unconcerned for human interlopers.

It almost wasn't so. This road through Owl Hollow was designed not for walkers or bicycles, but for other kinds of traffic: It is the veins of a housing development intended to spread its reach up through several of these small valleys north of Phoenix. With dozens of lots delineated, power boxes in place, stop signs at the ends of named streets, colorful flags waving at the entrance where there used to be a sales trailer, this project was poised for launch—just as the housing bubble burst. Of course this was bad news for the developer, and one can't help but feel some sorrow for the payments still needing to be made on this investment-gone-awry. But it is also hard not to feel some relief for the creatures on the surrounding ridges. They already have a community going here, one still only an economic upturn away from invasion.

These are troubled times for many in our society, and indeed around the world. ("When the US sneezes," say people elsewhere, "we catch pneumonia.") The housing market is only one piece of the troubled economic puzzle. Other factors include increased export of jobs to lower wage markets abroad, greedy financial institutions that took our savings down with them when they collapsed (as executives managed to bail out with golden parachutes), and rising prices for energy, food, metals, and other essentials as people in emerging economies begin to match our appetite for consumption.

Such changes have real-life impacts. Many of us have lost long-in-the-making investments, threatening our future financial security. Those immigrants we like to fuss at for taking jobs few of us seem to want any more? The money they send home is a critical source of support for millions of wives, children, and parents in Latin America—they're feeling our pain, too. And I was caught off-guard this past summer during a discussion with elementary children at a

Brethren camp when one of them suddenly volunteered that his family had had to move into grandma's basement.

Might this current crisis become an opportunity to reconnect us to a manner of living and to the reality of our global neighbors in a way that is rejuvenating and relationship-building—and in a way not possible while we are fully immersed in consumer culture? (In my travels, I often sense an inverse relationship between affluence and hospitality: the less of the former, the more of the latter.) Even in the housing market—based in the past on houses bigger than we really needed filled with gadgets to entertain our kids in the absence of meaningful work, play, or family life—could a down-sizing be good for us?

In relation to God's earth, might a downturn be just what we needed to bring us to our senses and help us see (as Jesus told us) that life is more than stuff and that God's creation is a gift we've been treating as an entitlement? Indeed, we could say these current troubles are the best thing that's happened lately to God's earth. One for-instance: After years of unremitting increases, we in the US are on track to emit 5 percent less of the greenhouse gas CO2 than we did last year: around 5.5 billion tons compared to 5.8 billion tons (about one-quarter of the world's human-caused emissions). The community up in Owl Hollow finds the current situation quite amenable to their well-being; is there a chance that we might, too?

. . .

The church is in trouble, too—or at least in a time of rapid and unrelenting change. That's what author and commentator Phyllis Tickle told us at the MESSENGER Dinner at this past summer's Annual Conference. Evidently we're on the cusp of one of those every-500-year cycles when the church collapses in on itself, only to emerge in a new form after the pain of new birth. But we didn't need a well-known scholar to tell us this: We only have to look out over the congregation on Sunday morning or consider the place of the religion in

national life—we ain't what we used to be.

For many of us, this is a time of near-crisis. We wonder how much longer we can deal with shrinking membership and budgets. We're not sure how to live with being a minority voice in society when we're used to having more stature. It's frustrating that our neighbors—or our children—don't find themselves attracted to the church many of us have known and loved.

It seems everywhere we look there are things to be worried about, changes bearing down on us in ways that threaten to undo or at least unsettle us. But perhaps this is a moment to take a cue from the resilience of God's creation. Certainly the earth cannot easily suffer the many destructive aspects of human impact and just keep bouncing back. Losing living things to extinction or whole ecosystems to pollution or abuse is sometimes irrevocable (They say without immediate and far-reaching measures, the Chesapeake Bay will likely never recover the bounty and diversity it knew before the arrival of Europeans). As Gwich'in elder Gideon James of Arctic Village, Alaska, told our August Learning Tour when speaking of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a pristine area threatened by oil drilling, "In this country we have land for farming, for housing, for industry—this land is the land for animals."

Left to God's design, however, the natural world often finds ways to renew itself and even reinvent itself in the wake of near collapse. Indeed, some say this is part

Does a tree falling in the forest make a sound? Certainly in one sense: The space its collapse creates will be heard as good news to those living things formerly dwelling in near-darkness of the forest floor—amazing new possibilities await. Photo is of the Budongo Forest Preserve in Uganda.



LEFT TO GOD'S DESIGN, HOWEVER, THE NATURAL WORLD OFTEN FINDS WAYS TO RENEW ITSELF AND EVEN REINVENT ITSELF IN THE WAKE OF NEAR COLLAPSE. . . FOR INSTANCE, A HUNDREDS-FEET-TALL CANOPY TREE CRASHES DOWN IN THE RAINFOREST TAKING SMALLER TREES AND CLINGING VINES WITH IT, ONLY TO OPEN UP SPACE FOR NEW LIFE.

of the essential nature of nature. For instance, a hundreds-foot-tall canopy tree crashes down in the rainforest taking smaller trees and clinging vines with it, only to open up space for new life—and even new lifeforms—to emerge in the suddenly sunny space below. How can we use current calamities as a moment of opportunity rather than a cause for frustration, anger, or resignation?

• • •

This is a time of great change in the religious landscape in our society. As in any time of change, some groups adapt, others spring into being *ex nihilo*, and others fall by the way. Which will be our course?

The sign at the edge of the new park in that Phoenix-area neighborhood announced the coming of a new congregation in an area where the next closest one was a few miles distant. “Oh no, not a church,” was my involuntary comment on seeing it for the first time. This drew an immediate reply from my companion: “You don’t think it’s a good thing for this community to have a new church?” I knew my response had better be good.

“Well, maybe.” It’s just that I had a hunch that a church start in this neighborhood would be a one-size-fits-all, least-common-denominator congregation heavy on entertainment and light on the “weightier matters of the law” as Jesus put it—justice and mercy and peace.

“Isn’t a church like that better than no church at all?” Drawing on every ounce of nonjudgmentalism I could muster, I replied that if a church portrays Christianity as something less than what Jesus meant it to be, I’m not sure it’s good for the people who attend or for the Christian movement or the larger society. The people are misled, the movement misrepresented, and the society misses out on a critical moral and spiritual voice calling on it to rein in its excesses and look out for those without a voice.

But I bet it will draw a crowd. Of course the corollary is that being smaller just goes to show you’re being faithful. Not so fast: Our diminishment can be just as much a mark of our lack of vitality and loss of commitment to our core values as it is of our cutting-edge witness. Yet I do believe that groups who put their faith on the line after the man-

ner of Jesus—standing by the marginalized, eschewing material excess, crossing boundaries in the name of justice and peace, inviting all into the new community, living with an edgy openness to where God may lead them—groups like this won’t attract everyone, but will attract those who are searching for just such a community.

As Brethren, we have been there and done that. The early Brethren were part of the creative ferment bubbling up from the Protestant Reformation, creating amazing new forms of religious expression as the old was tumbling down around them. What did they have going for them? They weren’t dogmatic, having seen how creedalism divides and even kills. They weren’t hierarchical, giving voice to all in the community. They weren’t afraid to challenge the status quo—whether church or state—in the name of the beliefs they held close. They were fervent in their new-found faith to the point of being willing to be uprooted and exiled in their quest to follow Jesus. “Convinced, they were convincing,” wrote historian Donald F. Durnbaugh of the early Brethren movement’s success in attracting adherents.

Believe it or not, there are congregations today who are acting this way—and adding new members because of it. They do it by promoting their values in the community, by preaching and teaching out of their core beliefs regarding justice and peace, by reaching out in unconventional ways to those around them, and by reminding their often-insulated neighbors that we are part of a human and ecological global community and we should live responsibly with these relationships.

• • •

That brings us to the next potential upside to our current downturn: Can it be an opportunity to begin to identify with our poorer neighbors in other parts of the world? Let’s face it: They would love to have our problems. In a world where over a billion people lack clean water, adequate shelter, educational opportunities, or a job with dignity and adequate income, moving to a smaller house and going with basic cable wouldn’t feel like that much of a sacrifice.

During our July 2009 Learning Tour to Las Americas, El

Alex Murphy of Green Tree Church of the Brethren (Oaks, Pa.) visits with girls in Nimule, Sudan. After her January 2009 visit she wrote: “I found the deepest satisfaction I have ever known by going to Sudan and learning how to dedicate myself to walk with the women, men, and children there in their journey of faith.”



IN OTHER WORDS, **OUR AFFLUENCE COMES AT THE PRICE OF OTHERS' SUFFERING.** AND THEY ARE AWARE OF THESE LINKAGES. THEY KNOW HOW MUCH THESE GOODS SELL FOR IN THE RICH WORLD, AND MAY RIGHTFULLY WONDER HOW WE PROFESS CONCERN FOR THEIR PREDICAMENT ON ONE HAND WHILE HOLDING A PRICED CUP OF COFFEE—OR NEW BLOUSE OR DOLL BABY—IN THE OTHER.

Salvador, we met and worked with families moving into two-room cinderblock houses from *champas*: ramshackle dwellings built anywhere they could be out of whatever materials could be scavenged.

As usual, however, our real “work” in such a situation is to learn about the people and their reality. So on Sunday morning we walked the mountainside with Fatima, an illiterate single mother of four. It was a nice morning stroll for us; but during the coffee-picking season from November through February, it is anything but that for her. Like most others in the community, this is her main source of income. They sign on for 15-day periods, out of which they work 12 days (no work on Sundays—and the owner makes sure to include three). How much do they earn for picking the second most-traded commodity in the world (after petroleum)? Three to five dollars for 100 pounds, which can take all day.

In perhaps the most poignant moment of the visit, Fatima showed us how she crawls up the mountainside on all fours, the 100-pound bag strapped around her forehead. She couldn't weigh more than 100 pounds herself. Then there's the several-kilometer walk to the hacienda. In the off-season, she sometimes is hired to cut weeds in the plantation using a machete. She says it rubs her hands raw. She is paid \$40 for 12 days of work.

This is not a pitiable situation of a poor person in a distant land: She and millions of others are directly connected to us and our lifestyles by things like coffee, clothing, toys, and other commodities that are produced there for a pittance and sold here for a handy profit. As Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano said in a recent interview, “Richness in the world is a result of other people's poverty.” In other words, our affluence comes at the price of others' suffering. And they are aware of these linkages. They know how much these goods sell for in the rich world, and may rightfully wonder how we profess concern for their predicament on one hand while holding a priced cup of coffee—or new blouse or doll baby—in the other.

Many of us want to do the right thing by these neighbors, so we search out fair trade items or donate to worthwhile causes. This is fine, as far as it goes. The challenge is to begin to move from these charitable responses toward one in which we put ourselves alongside these neighbors in solidarity—and perhaps the recent downturn gives us just such an opportunity.

What do we need to live? Many of us may be asking ourselves this question as we navigate lower wages or

smaller houses. And whether or not we have been affected by the downturn, it is a question that may help move us toward our neighbors and their needs. If this is a zero-sum game—our well-being at the expense of someone else's—then as we insist on less for ourselves and share our excess with our neighbors through fairer wages or programs that empower women or educate children, we begin not only to experience something of their situation (not always having everything we want) but tangibly increase their chances for a decent life. And we can look ourselves in the mirror and feel like we're doing the right thing with the life God has given us.

. . .

It will work that way for God's earth as well. As we require less for ourselves, owls and other creatures find their own lives enhanced and may even begin to recover something of the thriving communities that once characterized places like the Chesapeake Bay. That, too, will come back around to us in the form of a healthier ecosystem and a planet worth passing on to our children.

The word sacrifice has gotten a bad rap. There's no indication that Jesus found anything but joy in his minimalist lifestyle, and his moments of greatest inspiration seemed to come in places like the wilderness or hanging around with the poorest of the poor.

I'm not sure the Apostle Paul would have had much to say had he not shared in Jesus' sufferings by facing trials and hardships as a result of his faith. Rather than resent or regret his journey, it served as a springboard for writings that continue to inspire and guide us 20 centuries later.

Likewise, I'm guessing the early Brethren wouldn't have traded their life on the run for the comforts that accrue to those who settle down without a cause worth standing up for.

The same can be true for us. A life worth living awaits those who voluntarily or out of some necessity take the downward path toward a simpler, more compassionate, more justice-oriented lifestyle. More important, it's not just about us and our inner harmony, but about bringing us back into harmony with our neighbors afar and with God's creation all around us. And it may just make us into a church that attracts our children and anyone else looking for a better way. 

David Radcliff is director of New Community Project, a Brethren-related non-profit organization based in Elgin, Ill. (www.newcommunityproject.org)

TRAVELING ON THE SAME BUMPY ROAD

story and photos by Ben Barlow

NIGERIA CONFERENCE SPARKS REFLECTIONS ON MISSION AND FAITH



“Is the fighting over?” the village chief, Asi Allaji Ardo, asked me through our Fulani interpreter. I raised an eyebrow.

“Is the fighting over, now that Bush is gone?” Aha. “Not yet,” I said. “Is Bush an Indian or an Arab?” he asked.

Looking out as the heat distorted the image of a herd of long-horned cattle, the sticks gathered for firewood, and the women working at the well a short ways away, I marveled at the smallness of the world. But it’s not that small. While information spreads like a vine, the information—like in the kid’s game ‘tele-

phone’—gets garbled the farther it travels. In that far corner of the world, 5,720 miles and an ocean away from my apartment, it was evident that familiarity and foreignness coexist.

The exchange marked the fifth day of a two-week trip to the Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) Youth Conference in May. In addition to myself, our group included Nate and Jenn Hosler from Chiques Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa.; and Rebekah Jay, a member of Brook Park (Ohio) Community Church of the Brethren.

After landing in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, we spent the night at the EYN Abuja guest house (Most urban EYN congregations have a guest house akin to a hotel where EYN travelers and others can find lodging). We then traveled to the EYN guesthouse in the city of Jos for a night, and made the long and quite bumpy ride to EYN headquarters outside the remote northeastern Nigerian village of Kwarhi. Finally, our group found ourselves visiting a Fulani village.

The Fulanis, a historically nomadic, predominantly Muslim tribe of cattle farmers, have some permanent villages. The two we visited—the first established 35 years ago and the second much younger—were teeming with children, multiple wives of the respective chiefs, and curious stares at the *batures* (white people). Everywhere, there was hospitality as

The Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria youth conference meets in a large sanctuary at night.



VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

At least two EYN churches were destroyed in the northern city of Maiduguri, and several Brethren members were killed or injured in violence that swept across northeastern Nigeria in late July. The churches named in a report from EYN leaders include EYN Maiduguri/Wulari (or Maiduguri No. 1 church), which was burned down, and EYN Jajeri. In all, at least 13 churches were destroyed and more than 50 Christians killed in Maiduguri, the EYN leaders reported.

This is the third time violence has affected EYN churches in recent years: EYN members were injured in the town of Jos in central Nigeria during rioting in December 2008, and at least five EYN churches in Maiduguri were destroyed or damaged in February 2006, in violence sparked by the publication of Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

In an Aug. 4 letter to the president of Nigeria, World Council of Churches general secretary the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia urged Nigeria President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua to “ensure the safety of all citizens” and to see that “all perpetrators [of] acts of violence and human rights violations are brought to justice.”



we visited, children excited for their picture to be taken (and more excited to see their images on our digital cameras), and discussion of world events, and how barriers between our cultures can be surmounted.

None of us had been to Nigeria before, and each experience was eye-opening. The conference theme was “Launch out into the deep,” based on Luke 5:1-11 (KJV), and during the week we often felt that we had indeed been so launched. Hot, dry, exciting, challenging, awe-inspiring, and thought-provoking all combined in strange ways during the two weeks to provide descriptors for the trip.

Stripping away some of the things we often take for granted, like dependable electricity and water, helped prepare the soil as we joined with our Nigerian brethren (ages 18 to 45) in exploring how we might better breach the boundaries of our comfort zones. How do we, in the face of our own certainty about how this world around us works, say to Jesus, “but because you say so, I will let down the nets” (NIV).

The gathering, with an attendance of some 2,200 young adults (called “youth” in Nigeria), marked the 17th EYN Youth Conference and the first time a US Church of the Brethren delegation had been invited to take part. It was held in the EYN Conference Center, which, when completed, will

hold 3,500 people. It is located across from EYN headquarters at the entrance to the dusty mango tree-lined road to Kulp Bible College.

From leading devotions, to taking part in small group Bible studies, to dancing into the early morning hours at a concert/talent show, we worshiped, sang, and celebrated with our Nigerian hosts. At our morning devotions, after a powerful prayer from Rebekah and challenging reflections on scripture from Nate and Jenn, I reflected with the participants about our journey to the conference through the various towns and across smooth and bumpy roads (with which they were all too familiar).

That long, sometimes bumpy journey came to mind again as I stood beneath the tamarind tree in Garkida, site of Stover Kulp and Albert Helser’s first sermon in the area in 1923—not only the first Brethren sermon, but the first Christian sermon in northeast Nigeria.

Launching out into the deep, for me, took on a different meaning as I looked out and then sat on the rocks where the Nigerians had listened to Kulp and Helser 86 years ago. The idea of launching out into the deep took on a sharp edge as I looked at the missionaries’ graveyard and the gravestones of Kulp’s family, the Shankster twins, and others who had died on

the mission field. The passage from Luke rang clear as I looked at Laura Mae Wine’s grave marker, there in a remote corner of Nigeria, and saw “Born at Mt. Sidney, VA., USA,” a small town right in the middle of my neck of the woods. But launching out into the deep also rang clear as I thought about that first sermon; the fervent work of Brethren in Nigeria, India, China, Ecuador, and elsewhere; internationally recognized health and education programs; and the 180,000 to 200,000 members who make up EYN today.

I doubt Brethren missionaries were imagining as they preached that EYN youth one day would be admonished to “remember the missionaries, and what they gave so you could be here,” or

Women and girls at an EYN school greet the delegation in Nigeria.





A tamarind tree marks the spot of the first Brethren sermon in Nigeria.

Questions about women in ministry, rural versus urban church, older models and younger visions, and how to retain youth and young adults ring clear amid a very religious culture (50 percent Muslim, 40 percent Christian, 10 percent traditional African religions). In conversations, those questions seem all too familiar. Other discussions about structure, organization, programs of the church (including a very vibrant HIV/AIDS program), and the rotation of pastors are unfamiliar: the same and yet so very, very different.

In our devotions, I speculated about how many of the participants had probably taken the same route to get to Kwarhi as we had, and, really, it is much the same when it comes down to faith: We travel the same roads together, regardless of skin color, sex, nationality, job, wealth, or status. Church of the Brethren or EYN, we travel those roads together.

Like the roads from Abuja to Kwarhi, sometimes our journey is smooth, sometimes it is bumpy, sometimes it is slowed to a crawl, and sometimes we have to stop, look where we are going, and make sure we have chosen the best route to get there. All the while we are traveling together, to the same place—not to America or to Africa, but to a city whose builder and architect is God. **W**

Ben Barlow lives in Columbia, Md.; he is a member of Montezuma Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Va. He currently serves on the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board as chair-elect.

that Stover Kulp would be spoken of in much the same way as Brethren here speak of Alexander Mack. I doubt that Monroe Good, when he simply addressed a problem that needed to be fixed, was thinking about how Nigerians would still today be talking about a dam named after him.

I could write on and on about those who served in Nigeria—and for all of them, the story does not change: Their work is remembered and appreciated. They are spoken of fondly and respectfully. As Salamatu Joel, wife of the pastor of the EYN Abuja church, told us, “I am EYN, I will always be EYN, I am Brethren. I owe all I have to what the missionaries did.” It is hard to think that anyone pondering such things would not think about Luke 5:6: “When they had done so, they caught so many fish that their nets began to break” (NIV).

The church that has grown out of that one sermon and the years of work following it is a lot like—and yet very different from—our own.

NEW STAFF WITH EYN

Nathan and Jennifer Hosler of Elizabethtown, Pa., who attended the EYN Youth Conference in May, recently began serving in two new peace and reconciliation positions with the Nigerian church, working through the Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships office.

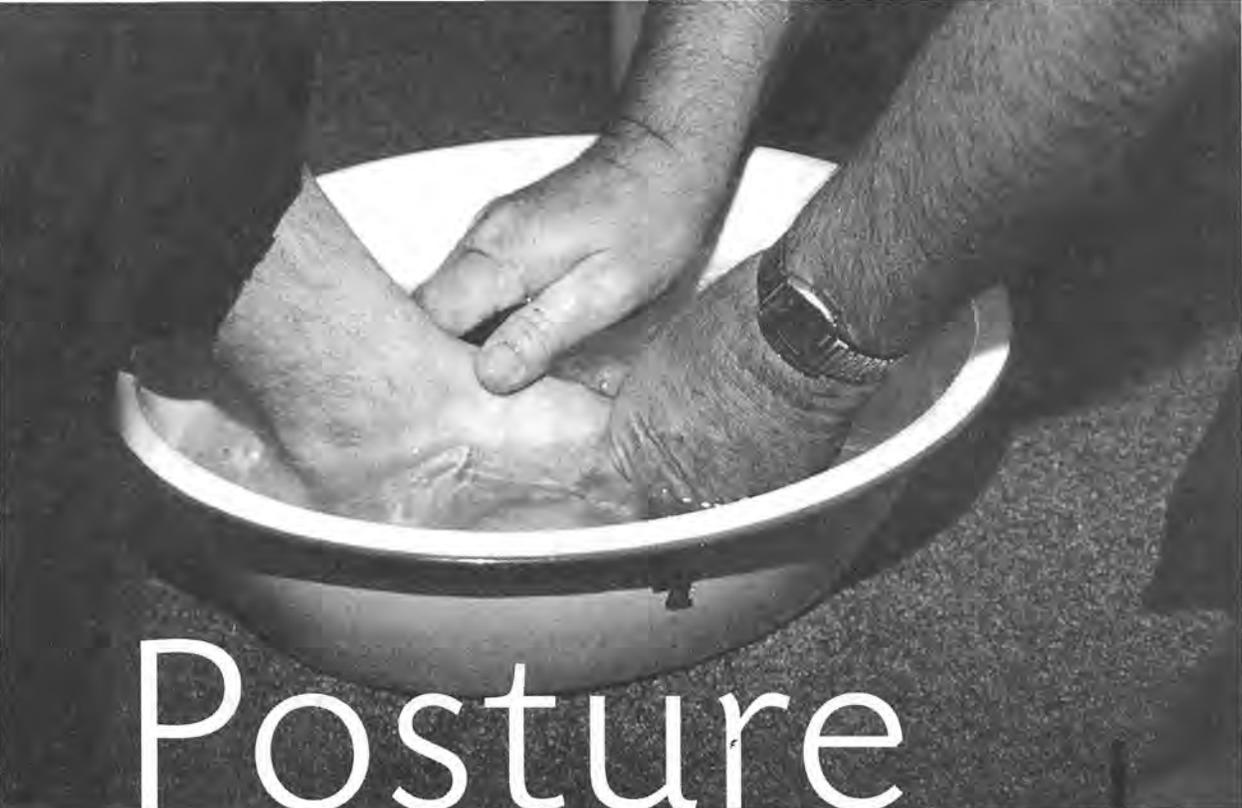
The Hoslers, who have both been lay leaders at Chiques Church of the Brethren, will fill joint positions as teacher of peace and reconciliation at Kulp Bible College and peace and reconciliation worker with EYN. They officially began on Aug. 16 and planned to travel to Nigeria in September.

Jennifer Hosler has been an English as a Second Language tutor with World Relief and with AMF International, and has worked at the Naaman Center, a Christian nonprofit substance abuse treatment center in Elizabethtown. She holds a bachelor of arts in biblical language from Moody Bible Institute and a master’s in community psychology and social change from Penn State Harrisburg.

Nathan Hosler served in Germany with Weierhof Mennonite Church through Eastern Mennonite Missions, has work experience as a carpenter, and has been a groundworker at Moody Bible Institute. He holds a bachelor’s in biblical language from Moody, and a master’s in international relations from Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I.

courtesy of Nathan and Jennifer Hosler





Regina Bryan

Posture preaches

WASHING FEET SENDS A MESSAGE

by James Benedict

Often people don't need to say a word, and we don't even need to see their faces, to have a pretty good idea what they are thinking or feeling. Experts call it "body language." But you don't need to be an expert to understand body language. In fact, studies show even toddlers can sometimes figure out what someone else is feeling just by observing how the person stands or sits.

If someone hangs her head, we know what that means. If someone crosses his arms and expands his chest, we know what that means. If someone sits up straight and faces straight ahead, we know what that means. Posture preaches.

That includes the posture we take when we kneel to wash feet. It says, "I am willing to serve. I do not need to lift myself up and dominate others. I am willing to be humble." It also says, "I am prepared to express my love for others in very practical, down-to-earth ways. I am willing to go beyond words and beyond what is convenient, easy, or comfortable."

Peter understood that posture preaches. He just didn't care for the message, at least initially. He asked Jesus to stop, to not wash his feet. But Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you will have no part with me." In other words, "If you won't listen to this message and take it to heart, you will never really understand who I am or what I am calling you to do and to be."

I would not go so far as to say that only those of us who wash feet are "real" Christians, while those who don't are not. But I do think washing feet has a unique power to teach us a lesson that is much needed and seldom taught otherwise. And I do think that those of us who wash feet and are washed are more likely than those who don't wash feet to appreciate and understand what it means to be followers of Jesus.

Posture preaches, and our posture when we bend to wash feet preaches a message not only to us but to the larger church and the world. It says we understand we are called to love and service, for one another and for all people everywhere. **W**

James Benedict is pastor of Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many Church of the Brethren congregations observe the love feast—which includes self-examination, a fellowship meal, feetwashing, and communion—on World Communion Sunday, which this year falls on Oct. 4. A love feast also typically takes place during Holy Week, often on Maundy Thursday.

1, 2, 3 John: Love letters and lovers' quarrels

Three short epistles address some deep divisions in the church

by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm

There are times in our lives when we need a good love letter. This is one of them. Fortunately, John gave us three.

A good love letter does several things. It announces the unalterable love of the lover to the beloved. It provides physical evidence of our lover's intentions (there's nothing quite like holding a hand-written letter). It endures over time so that you feel a renewed sense of

Gospel, these writings share a passion for the physical and spiritual reality of Jesus Christ, the Spirit's abiding presence among us, and the power of God's love to overcome arrogance, enmity, and fear.

But unlike the Gospel, they are not concerned with the relationship of Christian faith to Jewish traditions. Instead, they address the deep divisions in the church over claims

LIKE JOHN'S GOSPEL, THESE WRITINGS SHARE A PASSION FOR THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL REALITY OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SPIRIT'S ABIDING PRESENCE AMONG US, AND THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE TO OVERCOME ARROGANCE, ENMITY, AND FEAR.

assurance, wonder, hope, and joy whenever you re-read it. It can break open a hardened heart or help mend a broken one. And it is usually more poetic than didactic because love speaks not only to the mind but to the heart, soul, and body as well.

Few of us dispose of old love letters, and we regret it if we do. They have a way of rekindling hope when our hearts are breaking; John's letters are no exception. At a time when many of us worry about declining membership and dissension among us, these letters go right to the heart of our fears and longings.

Most scholars agree that 1, 2, and 3 John were composed around 100 CE by a revered elder of the wider community from which the Gospel of John was composed. Like John's

to perfectionism, Jesus' coming in the flesh, the saving significance of his death, and schismatic preaching. A fierce lovers' quarrel was under way. In response, 1, 2, and 3 John offer the only antidote powerful enough to overcome these poisonous afflictions: belief in Jesus Christ and love for one another.

Each letter has its own way of confronting the church's enmity and sins. Although traditionally thought of as a letter, **1 John** is more of a sermon that tackles the church's problems head-on. Lacking all formal modes of address and closure, it launches immediately into a declaration of what has been seen, heard, and touched concerning Jesus Christ, God's word of life (1:1-4). It offers words of confession and absolution before declaring the "old commandment" to love



Detail from Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo

one another and walk in God's ways (1:5-2:17). All of this is impossible without the Holy Spirit who abides in us and empowers us to abide in Christ and to fully love others (2:18-3:24).

It is the genius of John not to give us the details of what it means to believe in Jesus Christ and practice his love for others. We are simply told to believe in his physical life and his death on the cross (an "atoning sacrifice" both for ourselves and for the whole world, 2:2), and to "walk as he walked" (2:1-6). John trusts us to work out for ourselves exactly what this means and what we are to do. Instead, we are given the assurance of Christ's forgiveness of our sins and a sense of fearlessness given to those who seek perfect love rather than perfectionism (4:1-21). According to 1 John, Christian perfection is not the absence of sin but the presence of love—that is,

a wholeness evinced by those who seamlessly unite their love of God and love for brothers and sisters. The final chapter urges us to obey God, have faith in Jesus Christ, and trust in the assurance of his eternal life.

The book of **2 John** continues these themes in the form of a brief letter addressed to a specific congregation ("the elect lady and her children"). It reiterates the call to love one another by following Christ's commandments and warns against receiving deceivers into the household of faith.

Similarly, **3 John** speaks negatively of Diotrephes, a member of the church "who likes to put himself first" (v. 9) and expels those who disagree with him. This letter is addressed to Gaius, a leader of the church who is commended for walking in the truth of Christ's love and receiving traveling missionaries

with Christian hospitality.

It is one of the great ironies of the Johannine epistles that they urge love and hospitality among believers while warning against offering hospitality to those who have shown resistance to the elder's teaching by refusing hospitality to others! Love is often messy, as all true lovers know. Perhaps with God's help we can hold these contradictions in tension, even as all of us learn to confess our sins and receive forgiveness from God, the most faithful of all lovers (1 Jn. 1:8-9). **W**

Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm is associate professor of preaching and worship at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

MESSENGER's "Journey through the Word" series provides a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in November: Jude, by Christy Waltersdorff.

1, 2, 3 JOHN: A CLOSER LOOK

1, 2, & 3 JOHN: A CLOSER LOOK

Beloved verses: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:8-9); "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 Jn. 3:18); "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. . . . There is not fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfec-

tion in love" (1 Jn. 4:16b-18); "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good" (3 Jn. 11a).

The relationship of the Gospel of John to the letters of John: Various theories have been offered as to the historical sequence of the letters and their relationship to John's Gospel. It is most likely that the letters presuppose the Gospel and that the elder(s) who composed these letters drew on the Johannine tradition while interpreting it in new ways, for new contexts of the church's development. See R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel and Letters of John," in *Interpreting Biblical Texts* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998).

Workcamps: Making a difference

One youth shares about her summer experience

by Sarah Ullom-Minnich

I decided I wanted to attend a summer workcamp back in December when I put it on my Christmas list. My grandparents chipped in a little on the registration fee as part of my Christmas present, and before long it was time to pick which workcamp my youth group wanted to go to. All of us had different ideas, but when we checked our schedules there were only two options that would work. One was in Maryland and the other was in Elgin, Ill. Both seemed like interesting places to go, but the work in Elgin was more appealing to most of our group so in the end that was where we went.

We live in the middle of Kansas, but our flight was leaving from Kansas City at 9 a.m., meaning we had a 3-hour drive plus the time to get through security. We ended up waking up at 3 a.m. in order to get going in time. The drive up there and then the flight to Chicago went pretty smoothly, and before we knew it we were on our way to the Elgin church. We were the first group to arrive, but the groups from Michigan and Indiana

arrived shortly after.

Right away we all started getting to know each other, learned names, and then started playing games while we waited for the rest of the group to arrive.

That night we played a lot of get-to-know-you games. By the end of the day I could have told you the names of everyone there, including the advisors that had come from other towns. We McPherson people had been up for almost 20 hours, but no one was in any hurry to get to bed that night. The girls' rooms were really loud that night and every night after. Some of my funniest memories of the workcamp happened after 10:30 at night.

The next day we went to Hawthorne Hills nature center to weed out their mulched area and make the area look nicer. It was a really beautiful place. I somehow managed to rub against poison ivy at some point, which was discovered the next morning—fortunately we had a lot of itch medicine. The work was hard, but we had fun working with new friends. We toured PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) later that day. Our afternoon focus was on random acts of kindness, and we held a free car wash where we gave away free lemonade. On breaks between cars we sat under a tree and played mind games. It was fun trying to figure them out. Some of us also fixed up the church parking lot during that time.

That night we did a workshop on hunger and poverty. We were divided into groups of five to six and given a certain amount of money to go to the grocery store and buy a meal for our "family." The food we bought would be given to the food bank that we would volunteer at the next day. Some groups had only 10 dollars to feed six people. Two groups, mine included, were given 20 dollars, and one was given 40.

All of the groups managed to find a meal, although some were more filling than others. We discovered a lot of teamwork was needed in planning and finding a meal with

LEARN MORE

More than 30 workcamps were offered by the Church of the Brethren this past summer for junior high and senior high youth and young adults, drawing more than 700 participants. More information is at www.brethrenworkcamps.org.



Justine Davies

Above and at left, youth serve at some of the 30-plus workcamps offered by the Church of the Brethren this past summer.

Worship plans for 2010 NYC take shape

The list of worship speakers for the 2010 National Youth Conference has been finalized. Angie Lahman Yoder, part of the ministry team at Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz., will speak at the opening worship on July 17, and 2010 Annual Conference moderator Shawn Flory Replogle of McPherson, Kan., will speak for the closing service on July 22.

Others include Bridgewater (Va.) College academic dean Carol Scheppard, Brethren Revival Fellowship leader Jim Myer of Manheim, Pa.; Naperville (Ill.) Church of the Brethren pastor Dennis Webb; Brethren videographer David Sollenberger of Anville, Pa.; Shane Claiborne of Philadelphia, a leader in the new monastic movement; Jarrod McKenna, a leader in the emerging church movement in Australia; and drama troupe Ted & Company of Harrisonburg, Va.; along with the winners of the NYC youth speech contest.

The conference, expected to draw well over 3,000 senior high youth and advisors, will be held at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. More details are at www.2010nyc.org.

Courtesy of BVS



BVS Unit 284: Members of the summer orientation unit of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) have begun work at their placements. The unit participated in training from July 19 to Aug. 7 in Harrisonburg, Va. It was the 284th orientation unit for BVS. Following are the new volunteers, their congregations or hometowns, and work placements:

First row, from left: Dana Cassell (BVS staff); Sarah Rinko, Terryville, Conn., to Gould Farm, Monterey, Mass.; Julia Dowling, Rumson, N.J., to Jubilee USA Network, Washington D.C.; Sara Beth Stoltzfus, Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to Family Abuse Center, Waco, Texas; Beth Merrill (BVS staff).

Second row: Callie Surber (BVS staff); Emily Osterhus, Durham, N.C., to Capital Area Food Bank, Washington, D.C.; Anna Ehscheidt, Neuwied, Germany, to International Community School, Decatur, Ga.; Audrey Hollenberg, Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren, to Church of the Brethren Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Elgin, Ill.; Becky Farfsing, Cincinnati, Ohio, to Forthspring Inter-Community Group, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Myrta See, Mountain View McGaheysville (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to Su Casa, Chicago.

Third row: Steve Wiles, Elmira, N.Y., to HRDC, Havre, Mont.; Florian Koch, Gross Schneen, Germany, to Samaritan House, Atlanta, Ga.; Patricia Welch, Park City, Utah, to The Palms of Sebring (Fla.); Christian Schaefer, Bietigheim-Bissingen, Germany, to Samaritan House, Atlanta, Ga.; Emsi Hansen, Kropswolde, The Netherlands, to Family Abuse Center, Waco, Texas; John-Michael Pickens, Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to On Earth Peace, Harrisburg, Pa.; Emrah Sueruecue, Hamburg, Ga., to Abode Service, Fremont, Calif.



Emily LaPrade

only a certain amount of money available. My group had spaghetti, with canned veggies and brownie mix.

The next day we left for the food bank shortly after breakfast cleanup. The first job we were given was sorting and labeling meat, while a few of us worked on inspecting Doritos. We ate lunch outside on the lawn and had an activity showing how unevenly wealth is distributed in the world.

For the afternoon some of us went back to working on Doritos, and the rest of us labeled instant beef and mashed potatoes. Labeling those packages was absolutely one of the most fun parts of that week. We went through packages faster than they could print labels. That evening we went to a park to eat, and we celebrated a camper's birthday. Later we walked to a pool and went swimming.

The next day was our last full day, and it was recreation day. We went to the Church of the Brethren offices first, where we went to their morning chapel service and a few of us, myself included, volunteered to read scripture. We helped load a truck that was going to Maryland for disaster relief and to help some offices relocate their stuff. The rest of the day was spent in Chicago.

Finally, it was our last morning. There was a lot of cleanup and packing to be done. We were all sad to leave our new friends, but excited that we would be seeing our families and friends from home again soon.

Many of us may never see each other again, but we all had fun and it really did feel like we made a difference. I will definitely be participating in workcamps in the future, and I would recommend them to anyone who is thinking of going. 

Sarah Ullom-Minnich is a high school freshman this year. She is a member of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren.

Annual Conference 2010 plans to focus on 'Taking Jesus Seriously'

The 224th recorded Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren will be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., July 3-7, 2010, with the theme "Taking Jesus Seriously" drawn from John 14:15: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (NIV).

A theme statement from 2010 Annual Conference moderator Shawn Flory Repogle is available at www.cobannualconference.org/pittsburgh/theme.html. "We live in challenging times . . ." it says in part. "Among the most central ways the Brethren have lived out their spiritual inheritance—taking Jesus seriously—is through honest reading of the Gospels, followed by straightforward discipleship."

The Annual Conference office also announced that fees will increase beginning with the 2010 Conference. Advance registration for delegates will cost \$275 (\$300 onsite); advance registration for non-delegates will cost \$95 (\$120 onsite), Advance registration for children ages 12-21 will cost \$30 (\$50 onsite), and children under 12 will be registered for free. Discounts will be available for those registering for the weekend or single days of the Conference only, and for Brethren Volunteer Service workers.

Outgoing Annual Conference executive director Lerry Fogle said the increase was done "in response to expanding costs of arranging and holding the annual meeting." It is the first increase in registration fees since 2005.

In other Annual Conference news:

• **Two Annual Conference study committees are organizing to begin their work:** The resource committee on Secret Oath-Bound Societies, appointed by the Annual Conference officers at the direction of the delegates to the 2009 Conference, organized on Aug. 27. The committee includes Dan Ulrich, professor of New Testament studies at

Bethany Theological Seminary, as chair; Harold Martin, recorder; and Judy Mills Reimer. The group will develop a list of resources that affirms the Conference action of 1954 to educate and inform the church concerning membership in secret oath-bound societies. The committee is charged with completing its assignment by the 2010 Conference.

The other committee formed by the 2009 Conference is the Special Response Resource Committee on human sexuality issues. It will hold its organizational meeting on Oct. 12-13. The group includes Karen Long Garrett, Jim Myer, Marie Rhoades, John E. Wenger, and Carol Wise. This committee will develop study materials and a discussion guide for use in congregations, districts, and denominational groups, focused on the content of the paper "A Statement of Confession and Commitment" and the query "Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships." The committee has been asked to create study materials by April 1, 2010.

Information created by both resource committees will be made available on the Annual Conference website, via the Source packet, and through other communication vehicles.

• **The Annual Conference office in September moved** back from the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., to the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The new address and contact information is Annual Conference, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL, 60120; Chris Douglas, Conference director, 800-323-8039 ext. 228; Jon Kobel, Conference assistant, 800-323-8039 ext. 229; fax 847-742-1618. Douglas began functioning as Conference director Sept. 14. Retiring director Lerry Fogle will be in Elgin for training of new staff during multiple periods this fall.

PERSONNEL MOVES

• **Jan Eller** resigned this summer as administrator of the Church of the Brethren Women's Caucus after more than six years in the role.

• **Shannon Kahler** of North Manchester, Ind., has been called as the new director at Inspiration Hills, the Northern Ohio District camp located in Burbank, Ohio, effective Nov. 10. She has served as food services/marketing manager at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind., since 2004. She holds a business administration/marketing degree from William Tyndale College, a culinary management/culinary arts degree from Schoolcraft College, and an elementary education/biblical literature degree from Fort Wayne Bible College. She is a member of the Church of the Brethren Outdoor Ministries

Association, Christian Camp and Conference Association, and the American Camp Association.

• **Joanna Schofield**, director of academic services for Bethany Theological Seminary and Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Ind., submitted her resignation in August. She had served in the position since 1999. Schofield accepted an offer to work in a similar position for a newly created regional campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Representatives from both seminaries are working together to develop plans for a search process.

• **Brian Solem** began as publications coordinator for Brethren Benefit Trust on Aug. 24. He will provide oversight for all BBT publications, the BBT website, and other special projects. Solem

holds a bachelor of arts in English from Loyola University Chicago and taught English/vocabulary to adults in China from April 2008 to April 2009. Prior to teaching, he worked for Law Bulletin Publishing Company in Chicago for one year and was a classified advertising representative and contributing writer for *Legal Employment Weekly*.

• **Matt Witkovsky** submitted his resignation as one of the co-coordinators for the 2010 National Youth Conference (NYC) as of Aug. 31. He plans to continue in Brethren Volunteer Service and is working with the BVS staff on another assignment. NYC planning will move forward with co-coordinators Emily Laprade and Audrey Hollenberg, youth and young adult ministry director Becky Ullom, and the National Youth Cabinet.

WCC elects new general secretary, chooses 2013 Assembly location

The election of Norwegian theologian and pastor Olav Fykse Tveit as the new general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the selection of a venue for its next assembly were highlights of the WCC central committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, Aug. 26-Sept. 2.

Tveit, 48, was elected seventh general secretary of the WCC. He succeeds outgoing general secretary Samuel Kobia, who completes his tenure at the end of 2009.

The central committee, the main governing body of the WCC between assemblies, also issued a series of statements and minutes on wide-ranging religious, political, and social matters, and discussed issues of governance and finances, according to a WCC release.

Busan, South Korea, was chosen as venue for the WCC 10th Assembly in 2013. Park Jong-wha, chair of the international committee of the National Council of Churches in South Korea, expressed hope that the WCC's presence could "contribute greatly toward peaceful reconciliation and reunification" for the divided peninsula.

The central committee reviewed the WCC's programmatic work and acknowledged the unsustainability of programs as presently organized. It recommended that programs be restructured, and stressed the need for prioritization and a more modest, limited, and sustainable approach. A number of recom-



World Council of Churches general secretary-elect Olav Fykse Tveit fields questions from reporters after he was selected by the WCC central committee.

mendations related to the 2010 budget were adopted as well, and the moderator of the finance committee said further reductions in 2010 income for the WCC could be in the range of 5 to 10 percent.

Statements on specific international issues addressed situations in Pakistan, Israel/Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Fiji, and Darfur, Sudan. Other statements addressed caste-based discrimination, just finance and the economy of life, eco-justice and ecological debt, and anti-Christian violence. Additional statements called for Christians to seek a nuclear-weapon-free world, and reiterated WCC support for the right of conscientious objection to the military. The committee called on member churches to "uphold the right of refusal to bear and use arms" wherever possible.

For more information, go to www.oikoumene.org/cc2009.

Church planting group sets an energetic goal

The Church of the Brethren's New Church Advisory Committee and Congregational Life Ministries executive director Jonathan Shively have announced a commitment "to cultivate the networks and infrastructure to support 250 new church starts by 2015." The groups provide denominational support to the church planting work initiated by districts in the Church of the Brethren.

"God is doing a new thing through the Church of the Brethren," the committee said in a statement at www.brethren.org/churchplanting. "A movement of emerging mission points and church planting is gaining momentum. Passion is rising. Vision is expanding. Commitment is deepening. Networks are developing. People are acting."

The new commitment includes five priorities for the work of the New Church Advisory Committee: prayer, assessment of potential church planters, training for participants in the new church movement, coaching for church planters, and cultivating of resources. A year-long, denomination-wide prayer emphasis for church planting began in May 2009.

On the need to assess potential planters and the training and coaching that will be provided for church planters, the committee emphasized, "While all ministry gifts are welcome in the church, there are particular qualities, traits, and skills that make it more likely that a church planter will thrive in the challenges of new church development." The committee plans to have an assessment process for new church planters in place beginning in 2010, with a goal to make sure every church planter has the support and expertise of a trained coach.

Future training opportunities in church planting may include webinars and a variety of workshops and seminars, as well as the biannual conference for the church planting movement. The next such conference is scheduled for May 20-22, 2010, on the theme, "Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully" (1 Cor. 3:6). It will be held at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind. For more information contact churchplanting@brethren.org.



UPCOMINGEVENTS

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.

Oct. 24 Western Pennsylvania District conference, Greensburg, Pa.

Oct. 24-Nov. 1 Church of the Brethren Haiti workcamp

Oct. 30-Nov. 1 Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees meeting, Richmond, Ind.

Nov. 1 National Junior High Youth Sunday

Nov. 6-7 Shenandoah District conference, Bridgewater, Va.

Nov. 6-8 Illinois/Wisconsin District conference, Naperville, Ill.; Pacific Southwest District conference, Sacramento, Calif.

Nov. 13-15 Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) national conference, Camp Woodland Altars, Peebles, Ohio

Nov. 15-19 OMA directors/managers/ staff retreat, Camp Woodland Altars

'Consider it done'

'Beyond Our Means' recounts history of Brethren Service Center

Recently as we waited for our local CROP Walk to begin, the organizer—who attends the United Methodist Church—explained the history of the event. Sort of. He's a good fellow, but no one was quite sure what CROP stood for—or stands for, because it has changed from Christian Rural Overseas Program to Community Response to Overcome Poverty. So I raised my hand and asked if anyone there knew the Church of the Brethren had a hand in the founding of CROP.



FRANK RAMIREZ

Well, as I like to say, we're not born knowing this stuff. But if anyone there had read *Beyond Our Means* they would have known CROP began with a well-publicized "What for Relief Project" involving a train traveling across the country. They would have known why so many tons of relief supplies were shipped to post-war Europe through the sleepy little town of New Windsor, Md. They

would have known why that same town has an integral connection with the ecumenical organization known as Heifer International (and that it has Brethren roots, too!).

And they would also know what government officials never knew as they went about inspecting the ruins of homes due to be repaired by Brethren Disaster Relief volunteers in the community of Pass Christian, Miss., after it was struck by Hurricane Camille in 1969. The inspectors were only willing to approve repair to "pre-disaster conditions," and most of the houses in that community at that time did not have indoor plumbing. Brethren volunteers managed to find an old toilet stool and some pipe, which they planted on each site as it was inspected. The officials never knew it was the same toilet at each site as they approved and paid for the installation of indoor plumbing!

It's all part of the story of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor. As I said earlier, we weren't born knowing this stuff, but authors R. Jan and Roma Jo Thompson have lived at least a part of this story, and they have taken time to conduct research as well as interview many of the people who shaped

what is for some folks the linchpin of Brethren Service.

Thousands of people have been part of this history, most of them volunteers. Whether it was those shipping grease to be made into soap; sewing cloth into children's underwear as part of a relief effort; baling clothing; unpacking, pricing, then repackaging items for sale in the SERRV shop; or undergoing training as a member of Brethren Volunteer Service, they were all fulfilling the mandate of the gospel in the name of Jesus. The actual value of their donated goods and labor is incalculable, but at least a measure of their sacrifices is made known.

The Thompsons are telling a story that may be known in part to some, but that bears retelling because Brethren seem to have a difficult time taking credit. There's a good reason. If one were truly to add up the accomplishments of this tiny denomination it almost seems as if one has crossed the line from boasting through bragging to lying. Can such a small group of believers truly have impacted a world of misery in such a brave and selfless way? Evidently so.

The Thompsons begin by chronicling the colleges that constructed the original buildings at the core of what has come to be known as the "Brethren Service Explosion." A dizzying array of names are given as one program after another proceeds from vision to reality. The changing nature of ministry meant the requirements of each decade were different, but whether it was Disaster Child Care, selling third-world crafts for fair market value, processing refugees such as the Kalmuks who did not fit any ethnic category, sheltering On Earth Peace, or providing hospitality to anyone and everyone, the Thompsons make it clear it was not a matter of "can do" but "consider it done."

We are living through a time of caution and "can't." Some might say we can't afford to count the cost. This book may inspire us to reconsider and remember that in Matthew 25 Jesus didn't ask who had taken time to proclaim him Lord and Savior. Evidently he already knew that. Jesus identified those who had given him food, drink, clothing, and care, and then made the stark comment that whatever we did for the least of these was done for him. 

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

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Beyond Our Means: How the Brethren Service Center Dared to Embrace the World*

Authors: Church of the Brethren members R. Jan and Roma Jo Thompson

Publisher: Brethren Press (Elgin, Ill.), 2009. Cost: \$18.95.

To order: Call Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 or visit www.brethrenpress.com.

Notes: The authors credit the Brethren Service Center—including staff Stan Noffsinger and Roy Winter—for encouragement and material support, along with the editorial skills of Julie Garber and Nancy Klemm, and archival assistance from Ken Shaffer and Logan Condon, among many others.



ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Ellen K. Layman, outgoing director of special projects at Bridgewater, received the college's 2009 Merlin and Dorothy Faw Garber Award for Christian Service on June 28. . . . The 27-member Bridgewater College Alumni Choir presented a concert Aug. 16 at Bridgewater Church of the Brethren.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

The campus launched an official E-town Facebook page in August, drawing nearly 1,000 fans in its first four days. Elizabethtown also recently launched videos on YouTube. . . . Elizabethtown presented diplomas to more than 500 students during commencement on May 16.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata was ranked 85th among the nation's top 100 liberal arts colleges in this year's *US News & World Report* poll, a 13-spot jump from a 98 ranking last year. In addition, *Forbes.com* ranked Juniata 75th in the nation in its recently released "America's Top Colleges 2009" poll.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded La Verne a five-year, \$899,746 Robert Noyce Teacher Scholars Program grant to assist in educating and training science and math teachers. . . . Interim athletic director Julie Kline announced that the men's and women's tennis programs would be placed on hiatus at the conclusion of the 2009 season.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester was expecting a record enrollment of at least 1,200 students this fall, with a first-year class of more than 400. The school was adding more than 21 class sections to accommodate the growth. . . . *US News & World Report* has given Manchester sixth place in its "Great Schools, Great Prices" Midwest rankings. Manchester was also ranked 18th overall among Midwest baccalaureate colleges and universities.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson exceeded its million-dollar annual fund goal for fiscal year 2009 by raising \$1,018,332. Annual fund dollars support scholarships and departmental needs and serve as a budget-relieving component of the college's overall fundraising.



courtesy of Tyler Goss

Youth jump with Chris Douglas, now director of conference planning, at the 2008 Annual Conference.

Brethren take a photographic leap of faith

Jumping photos have swept across the denomination

Look, up in the sky! It's a bird. It's a plane. No—it's a bunch of Brethren leaping for the latest in a growing series of jumping photos.

Look through the "Brethren We Have Met to JUMP!" site on Facebook, and you can spot 2009 Annual Conference moderator David Shumate, denominational staff, pastors, camp directors, and even Alexander Mack kicking up their heels with youth and young adults around the church.

It all started at the Roundtable regional youth conference at Bridgewater (Va.) College in 2007. Beth Haynes, a member of Fraternity Church of the Brethren in Winston-Salem, N.C., thought it would be a good way to capture the energy of the youth gathered there. She rounded up some friends from Camp Bethel and the previous summer's National Youth Conference in the college's gym. Then—click!—with Tina Lowe behind the camera, and after a few attempts to get it right, the first jumping photo was recorded.

"There really is no ideal way to capture the excitement and inexpressible joy found among Brethren youth with such a passionate love for God and others, but I thought a jumping picture would be a worthy attempt," Haynes says.

She thought it was a one-time thing. But everyone liked it so much that some more photos happened during Virlina District conference that fall, and again at Roundtable the next year. Soon everyone was hooked. At the 2008 Annual Conference one of Haynes' friends, Tyler Goss, took the photo craze to a new level: How many "cool Brethren people" could they get in jumping photos with them?

Goss and another friend, Kay Guyer of Woodbury, Pa., began seeking candidates for the photos. Soon Youth/Young Adult Ministry director Chris Douglas, 2008 Conference moderator Jim Beckwith, New Community Project director David Radcliff, videographer Dave Sollenberger, Brethren band Mutual Kumquat, and others found themselves leaping into the air. Not one declined.

"It was just a lot of fun," says Goss, a member of West Richmond (Va.) Church of the Brethren. "Then we posted it (online), and kids just kind of went crazy."

It's still going strong. The Facebook group has more than 250 members, and more than 140 photos have been posted there alone. At this past summer's Annual Conference, Guyer featured many of the photos in a video that won a Conference contest and was shown during a business session.

"It's simple, it's fun, and it takes our mind off some of the politics in the church," Guyer says of the photos. "It's something we do together. We jump." "And," Goss adds, "It's very Brethren."—Walt Wiltschek

NYC 2010 worship speakers announced, see p. 23

Christians must work through government

John C. Graybeal [June letters] rather curiously dares anyone to show that Jesus used the power of government to accomplish his goals. Of course no one is going to take that dare seriously, for the very simple reason that the government of Israel at the time was totally under the cruel heel of the mighty Roman Empire, with authority stretching from Pontius Pilate across the Mediterranean Sea to

the emperor in Rome.

Is Brother Graybeal suggesting that Jesus and his disciples could have worked with Pilate or Caiphas or Herod to help the poor and disposed if they had wanted to? Contemporary disciples of Jesus know they have to accomplish many of their works of love and mercy through political systems.

William Wilberforce, for instance, followed Jesus right into Parliament, where he shrewdly used the system to abolish the evils of slavery in the

British Empire. That is only one shining example of how we Christians can, how we *must* use the power of government to accomplish the goals of Jesus.

Edward Huber
Philadelphia, Pa.

Listen to a third voice

I read with interest that "decisions made by the 670 delegates to Annual Conference set in motion at least two years of intentional church-wide conversation about two documents: 'A statement of Confession and Commitment' and 'Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships.'" Both were accepted as special response items.

It seems the Church of the Brethren has been having this "conversation" for a long time, only now a Special Response Resource Committee was named to develop resources to aid us in this tête-à-tête (a move in the right direction, I believe).

If I understand these decisions correctly, they mean that the 1983 paper "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective" remains our official position for at least two years, namely that same-sex

 **Pontius' Puddle**



"Then some people came, bringing to Jesus a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him. . . ." Mark 2: 4

Open roof award nominations

Do you know of a Church of the Brethren congregation or district that has done something extraordinary to become more accessible to those with disabilities? Tell us about it, even if it's your own!

Visit www.brethren.org/openroof for the form to nominate next year's recipient.

Nomination deadline: February 1, 2010.

Contact Donna Kline,
Director of Deacon
Ministries, with questions.
Dkline@brethren.org
800-323-8039



Church of the Brethren

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covenantal relationships are not acceptable from the Christian perspective.

Thus far in this ongoing conversation, there seems to be two voices. May I suggest that a third voice be allowed in on the conversation: the originator and initiator of human sexuality. After all, who has greater authority to speak to the issue?

Actually, God has already spoken—even put it in writing (see Gen. 1:26-28a & 2:24). Jesus—part of the “us” from the beginning—repeated God’s intent for human sexuality during his earthly ministry (see Matt. 19:4-6a).

I have decided to submit my opinion regarding human sexuality to the only one whose word is truth and invite other members of the Church of the Brethren engaged in this conversation to do the same.

Lois Duble
New Windsor, Md.

Definitions are too narrow

Every month in this wonderful publication, I read the same classified ad calling for pastors. So, I feel it is safe to assume, our denomination needs ministers. Right?

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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)

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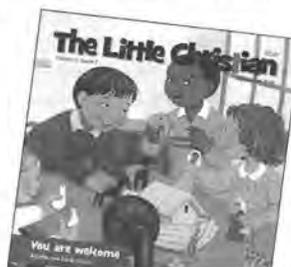
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or call 800-328-4648 to order.



OK. Our congregation has called two faithful, gifted people out of our midst in the past 10 years and encouraged their calling to ministry. We supported them as they both attended seminary. We celebrated with them as they graduated. We prayed for them as they pursued jobs in the ministry. We rejoiced with them when they both received calls.

But here is the sad fact: Neither of them is working in a Church of the Brethren congregation. They were both forced to seek ordination in a denomination that was open to and thrilled to receive their gifts. Why did they leave the church they both loved so much? Because we as a denomination wouldn't "recognize" their call to the ministry and allow for their ordination.

Now, my understanding is that even now as we are in the 51st year of ordaining women, that there are still congregations in our denomination who would never consider calling a woman to serve in their pulpit. Do I agree with them? No. Do I respect that that is their decision to make based on where they

are as a congregation? Yes! So, why can't we respect the decision of a congregation among us to call a minister to serve them who is homosexual?

I know that we as a church have a position paper about human sexuality. But I also know that I didn't "choose" to be heterosexual. It is simply who I am. And more importantly, it is just a small part of who I am. I am a wife, mother, homemaker, daughter, sister, friend, reader, crafter, Facebooker, caretaker of the earth, and child of God, just to name a few. I will never understand some people's desire to define another person's role/value in this world based solely on their sexual orientation.

I understand that we have a history that includes a split over the topic of Christian education: a topic that today, from what I can gather, is a non-topic. I pray that we can continue to dialogue with each other, pray together, and seek forbearance with each other over topics on which we are so divided.

Carie Gross
Portage, Mich.

CLASSIFIEDADS

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.

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

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

New Members

- Beverton, Mich.:** Rick York. Kandy York, Glenn Blades, Lana Blades, Cole Blades, Casey Blades
- Brooklyn, First, Brooklyn, N.Y.:** Phill Earl Casquete, Gabriela Juarez, Neida Sorto
- Brownsville, Md.:** Clifton Smith, Brenda Mentzer, Janice Mentzer, Edward Clipp, Jodie Holmes, Leigh Ann Shorten, Kiersten Coulter
- Geiger, Friedens, Pa.:** Linda Webb, Michael Yutzy, Michelle Yutzy
- Green Tree, Oaks, Pa.:** Larry Hudy, Tara James, Jennifer Raudenbush
- Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.:** Megan Harne, Ashleigh Hessong, Chloe Kehlbeck, Abbey Moser, Annie Noffsinger, Kate Noffsinger, Cody Westwood, Kaitryn Delauter, Paul Smith, Andre Kiss, Beatrice Kiss, David Meinders, Doris Meinders, David Ryan Meinders, Daniel Meinders, Diane Moser, Christopher Myers
- Grottoes, Va.:** Anita Morris, Rickey Morris, Cindy Ritchie, Rickey Ritchie
- Hagerstown, Md.:** Bob Stough, Ellie Stough, Grover Clever, Agnes Clever
- Hanover, Pa.:** Matthew Hershberger, Joseph Carolus, Betsy Hoffer
- Henry Fork, Rocky Mount, Va.:** Kelly Smith, Petey Smith, Olivia Smith, Mercedes Baily, Paul Allery, Linda Allery, Amber Buck, Darrin Bourgondien
- HIS Way Fellowship, Mills River, N.C.:** Lillian Diaz Lopez
- Kokomo, Ind.:** Annette Bricker
- Marion, Ind.:** Thomas Robert Biddle
- Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.:** Delaney McGlaughlin, Nicholas Cole Shuke, Joshua Keith Sheets, Jacob Quinter Garber, Megan Lee Meyerhoeffer
- Modesto, Calif.:** Kelsey Boardman, Matt Roy, Mark Wolfe, Michelle Wolfe
- Mohican, New Salem, Ohio:** Jim Durham, Carol Durham,

- Fred Scharfenort, Jessica Price, Christopher Orosz, Nikolas King
 - Mohrsville, Pa.:** Jamie Klotz, Lisa Klotz, Dan Young, Abi Young
 - Montezuma, Dayton, Va.:** Jared Diehl, Kim Showalter, Randy Showalter
 - New Beginnings Fellowship, Lititz, Pa.:** Megan Brubaker, Ethan Bruckhart
 - New Carlisle, Ohio:** Ashley Poindexter, Madison Semler, Nathan Moore, Merrill McCray
 - Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind.:** Traci Michael, Keagon Michael, Adam Braun, Riley Braun, Brooke Parrish, Jared Fawcett, Adam Ballard, Anita Vardaman, Don Barnes, Ollinda Barnes, Angel Carter, Scott Bluhm, Rejena Bluhm, Tammy Oliver, Samantha Oliver, Blake Girod, Jennifer O'Neil
 - Saint Petersburg, Fla.:** Michael Shook, Terri Shook
 - Sheldon, Iowa:** Scott Maggert, Ann Maggert, Sam Maggert, Simon Maggert, Rachel Maggert, Sally Young
 - Smith Mountain Lake, Wirtz, Va.:** Marleen Yancey, Amber Fleming, Trey Fleming, Rhyanna Cox, Robert Cox
 - Somerset, Pa.:** Robert Fabian, Julie Stanton, James Yoder, Erik Bittner, Kelly Fabian, Christopher Miller, Holly Shadle, John Shadle, David Stanton
 - Way of Hope Christian Fellowship, Boswell, Pa.:** Brian Baker, Kayla Sinclair, Barb Menhorn, Jennifer Rummel, Becky Weimer, Marjorie Speicher
- Anniversaries**
- Coulson, Russell and Dorothea, Harrisburg, Pa.,** 50
 - Davis, Carl, Sr., and Joan, Greensburg, Pa.,** 50
 - Flint, Don and Nancy, Sterling Heights, Mich.,** 55
 - Fulcomer, David R. and Ellen, Greensburg, Pa.,** 55
 - Goodwin, Bill and Marian, Seminole, Fla.,** 50
 - Jones, Leonard and Wanetta, Goshen, Ind.,** 60
 - Jones, Robert and Betty, Salem, Ohio,** 60
 - Lippy, Paul and Shirley, Frederick, Md.,** 55
 - Long, John and Dotty, McGeahysville, Va.,** 55
 - Mack, Harold and JoAnn, Dallas Center, Iowa,** 50
 - Mathias, Wilmer and Faye, Gaithersburg, Md.,** 50
 - Merkey, Vernon and Frances,**

Ankeny, Iowa, 55
Myers, Richard and Phyllis,
 North Canton, Ohio, 60
Reber, Earl and Anna,
 Richmond, Va., 50
Redifer, Rodney and Alda,
 McGeheysville, Va., 60
Reed, Raymond and Carol,
 Windber, Pa., 50
Romick, Ray and Betty,
 Alleman, Iowa, 65
Sievers, Theodore and Alma,
 York, Pa., 60
Stiver, Don and Lena,
 Syracuse, Ind., 55
Tornetta, Joe and June,
 Eagleville, Pa., 50
Woodie, Bobbie and Phyllis,
 Troutville, Va., 60

Deaths

Abney, Howard, 81, Clinton,
 Mo., Aug. 7
Anstine, James W., 79, North
 Canton, Ohio, June 2
Barb, Teresa J., 49, Mount
 Sidney, Va., July 24
Barkdoll, Lessie, 84,
 Middletown, Md., March 15
Becks, Rita V., 86, Grottoes,
 Va., June 4
Bond, Ruth, 87, Ankeny, Iowa,
 July 21
Brown, Dorothy, 72, Des
 Moines, Iowa, Aug. 20
Buckingham, Letha E., 98,
 Middleville, Mich., July 31
Burgus, Jean, 88, Dallas
 Center, Iowa, Jan. 11
Campbell, Ruth R., 90,
 Grottoes, Va., March 19
Crandall, Patricia, 71, Denton,
 Md., June 6
Crouse, Donald, 81, Newville,
 Pa., July 2
Danner, Margie, 90, Knoxville,
 Md., July 19
Davis, Ethel Lee Dudley, 80,
 Waynesboro, Va., June 25
Delauter, Goldie, 89, Boons-
 boro, Md., Aug. 22, 2008
Delauter, Ora, 94, Boonsboro,
 Md., Oct. 22, 2008
Diehl, Ada L., 93, Mount
 Morris, Ill., July 23
Ducca, Blanche Marie Shimer,
 99, Columbiana, Ohio, July 7
Eis, David R., 70, Elkhart, Ind.,
 Aug. 20
Eshelman, A. Max, 77, New-
 Enterprise, Pa., Aug. 10
Flora, George, 87, Brookville,
 Ohio, May 20
Frysinger, Doris J., 66,
 Harrisburg, Pa., July 4
Funk, Ruth, 89, New Oxford,
 Pa., July 19
Garber, Paul, 85, Salem, Ohio,
 Aug. 18
Geiman, Frances Davis, 92,
 Waynesboro, Va., June 20
Geiser, Virginia, 101, Windber,
 Pa., Feb. 26
Grimm, William, 85, New

Carlisle, Ohio, April 8
Grossnickle, Mildred, 95,
 Myersville, Md., July 21
Heisey, Harold V., 79,
 Indianola, Iowa, July 11
Henry, Helen Frederick
 Kauffman, 97, Goshen, Ind.,
 July 22
Henson, Mary, 97, Boonsboro,
 Md., July 20
Hofmann, Eugene, 80,
 Myersville, Md., March 24
Holsinger, Rodney, 84,
 Denton, Md., July 19
Hostetler, Harley S., 80,
 Goshen, Ind., Aug. 29
Houston, Ruth R., 97, New
 Paris, Ind., Aug. 5
Hulvey, Paul Calvin, 90, Mount
 Sidney, Va., July 13
Kauffman, Betty Jane, 84,
 Columbiana, Ohio, March 3
Kidd, Mary, 76, Salem, Ohio,
 May 11
Kintner, Virginia, 83, Adrian,
 Mich., July 21
Kline, Delores, 75, Boonsboro,
 Md., July 15
Kline, Franklin, 71, Boonsboro,
 Md., Dec. 3
Kline, Thomas, 83,
 Hagerstown, Md., Feb. 3
Knox, Vurlene, 60, Dayton,
 Ohio, June 28
Koogler, Margaret A., 86,
 Bluffton, Ohio, Aug. 16
Koons, Vera, 99, Ankeny, Iowa,
 July 26
Lefever, Ernest W., 89, New
 Oxford, Pa., July 29
Liljegren, Lucille, 91, Des
 Moines, Iowa, March 15
Link, Lorraine, 62,
 Hagerstown, Md., July 2
Longanecker, Lloyd, 89,
 Columbiana, Ohio, June 5
Lucas, Lou Fain, 86, Troutville,
 Va., July 20
Martin, Nora May, 88,
 Hagerstown, Md., June 20
Marvin, Eleanor Ruth O'Field,
 84, Cerro Gordo, Ill., July 14
McCloud, Carol, 63,
 Johnstown, Pa., April 15
McKimmy, Clair, 93,
 Beaverton, Mich., July 1
Morris, Nina S., 90, Grottoes,
 Va., July 29
Morrison, Ronald, 83,
 Dillsburg, Pa., July 30
Moss, Betty, 87, Windber, Pa.,
 April 19
Musselman, Evelyn, 92,
 Greenville, Ohio, Feb. 15
Oss, Mabel Cannon, 99,
 Keyser, W.Va., June 8
Peters, Doris Trout, 82,
 Roanoke, Va., Aug. 9
Petry, Marjorie E., 95, North
 Canton, Ohio, July 13
Pryor, Edna Louise, 90,
 Boonsboro, Md., April 22
Pulaski, Myrtle, 94, Chicago,
 Ill., April 23
Reynolds, Odell Byers, 83,

Buena Vista, Va., July 18
Rohr, Wanda, 81, Boonsboro,
 Md., Feb. 9
Sarver, Hazel, 87, Friedens,
 Pa., June 13
Sherrick, Dorine, 72, Polo, Ill.,
 May 11
Smith, Ed, 87, Frederick, Md.,
 July 1
Smith, Ruth, 78, Boonsboro,
 Md., July 10
Snyder, Geraldine, 89, Carlisle,
 Pa., July 20
Stone, Hampton, 77, Bassett,
 Va., July 25
Theal, Harry, 93, Hershey, Pa.,
 Aug. 2
Torrence, Glen, 82, Monclova,
 Ohio, July 7
Trout, Ramona, 40, Frederick,
 Md., Aug. 14
Waggy, Naomi Whitacre, 85,
 Goshen, Ind., July 22
Wagner, Barbara A., 75,
 Gettysburg, Pa., July 20
Welling, Dwayne, 79,
 Mechanicsburg, Pa., July 22
Welsh, Miriam, 87, Brookville,
 Ohio, May 9
Wilson, John William, Jr., 52,
 Middletown, Md., March 29
Wood, Maxine, 90, Panora,
 Iowa, July 11
Young, Edna Marie, 86,
 Bridgewater, Va., July 10
Keadle, Don, 77, Hagerstown,
 Md., March 25
Kelly, Pearl W., 97, McPherson,
 Kan., May 31
King, Kaye, 71, New
 Enterprise, Pa., May 15
Kinzie, Agnes R., 94, Troutville,
 Va., Oct. 15, 2008
Kline, Warren, 103, Lebanon,
 Pa., June 9
Knieriem, Florence B., 76,
 Wilmington, Del., March 21
Kulp, Walter, 80, Akron, Pa.,
 April 18
Kunkle, Bernice, 92, Clymer,
 Pa., June 10
Land, Patrick, 41, Ephrata, Pa.,
 April 29
Lawrence, Helen, 85,
 Hagerstown, Md., June 21
Lumsden, Barbara, 76, Mount
 Morris, Ill., July 9
Maynor, Robert, 80, Hico,
 W.Va., May 18
McDowell, Margaret A., 56,
 Troy, Ohio, May 5
McIntyre, Walter, 95,
 Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 22
Metzler, Irene, 58,
 Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 24
Meyers, Rebecca, 98,
 Bridgewater, Va., April 7
Moffet, Freda M., 84, Topeka,
 Kan., June 29
Moon, Evaline, 90, Friedens,
 Pa., April 2
Moon, Walter, 94, Friedens,
 Pa., June 9
Mullen, Thomas J., 74,
 Richmond, Ind., June 19

Needy, Kathleen, 78,
 Smithsburg, Md., Feb. 10
Newcomer, Mike, 58, Bremen,
 Ind., March 19
Patterson, Jeannette W., 67,
 Roanoke, Va., July 2
Pluto, Gladys, 77, Uniontown,
 Pa., July 9
Polder, Kitty, 83, Saint
 Augustine, Fla., March 9
Posey, Louise, 93, Warrenton,
 Va., May 31
Pote, John David, 77,
 Southlake, Texas, Nov. 22
Reinecker, Joan, 79,
 McPherson, Kan., July 9
Rhodes, Veda, 94, Bridge-
 water, Va., Sept. 28, 2008
Ritchey, Frances, 82, Manheim,
 Pa., May 8
Robinson, Mary Carter, 99,
 Hillsville, Va., June 2
Rock, Harold, 79, Troutville,
 Va., March 14
Rock, Leonard, 82, Troutville,
 Va., May 6
Rohrer, Joanna, 84,
 Mechanicsburg, Pa., April 14
Sanger, Merrill, 88, Quinter,
 Kan., April 12
Shank, Marian, 92, Lancaster,
 Pa., May 28
Shay, Paul, 100, Morgantown,
 W.Va., Dec. 2
Shenk, David, 79, Manheim,
 Pa., May 14
Sink, Jettie, 97, Bassett, Va.,
 June 23
Snavely, Emerson H., 87,
 Palmyra, Pa., June 25
Spitzer, Margaret, 93,
 Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 26
Stauffer, Bessie M., 93,
 Beaver Creek, Ohio, July 15
Stiles, Ruby, 87, Cushing,
 Okla., May 12
Strickler, Richard C., 80,
 Keyser, W.Va., May 6
Thompson, Maxine
 Cunningham, 83, Amisville,
 Va., Feb. 9
Ulmer, Robert D., 22, Al Anbar
 Province, Iraq, June 5
Whetzel, Willis A., 75, Dayton,
 Va., March 26
Willard, James Feather, 99,
 Aurora, W.Va., June 4
Willems, Alvin, 83, McPherson,
 Kan., May 22
Wine, Max, 81, Bridgewater,
 Va., May 25
Witter, Merle E., 79,
 Chambersburg, Pa., July 10
Woodie-Brallier, Marie, 90,
 Monterey, Mass., May 30
Wray, Harry W., 81, Kokomo,
 Ind., July 10
Yates, Gloria, 93, Fairfax, Va.,
 Oct. 29, 2008
Zang, Selma, 72, Ephrata, Pa.,
 April 25
Ziegler, Lloyd, 84, Audubon,
 Pa., July 10
Zimmerman, Harold L., 82,
 Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 30

Licensings

Boshart, Jeffrey, Atl. N.E. Dist.
 (Lebanon, Pa.), May 17
Boshart, Margaret K., Atl. N.E.
 Dist. (Lebanon, Pa.), May
 17
deCoursey, Audrey, Ill./Wis.
 Dist. (Highland Avenue,
 Elgin, Ill.), May 24
Gong, Carolyn P., W. Plains
 Dist. (Prince of Peace,
 Littleton, Colo.), June 7
Hackman, Nathan, Atl. N.E.
 Dist. (East Fairview,
 Manheim, Pa.), May 3
Jones, Carl Douglas, Virgina
 Dist. (Fairview, Rocky
 Mount, Va.), May 24
Kochler, Marilyn, N. Plains
 Dist. (Fairview, Unionville,
 Iowa), May 3
Price, Susan Marie, Pac. SW
 Dist. (Empire, Modesto,
 Calif.), May 31
Shaver, Janet S., N. Ind. Dist.
 (Nappanee, Ind.), Dec. 14
Smith, Diana M., Mo./Ark.
 Dist. (Spring Branch,
 Wheatland, Mo.), April 10
West, Nathan L., Mid-Atl. Dist.
 (Welsh Run, Mercersburg,
 Pa.), May 14

Ordinations

Davis, Denzil, W. Marva Dist.
 (Oak Grove, Levels, W.Va.),
 May 31
deCoursey, Audrey, Ill./Wis.
 Dist. (Highland Avenue,
 Elgin, Ill.), May 31
Elza, Roger L., W. Marva Dist.
 (Glady, W.Va.), June 21
Leighton-Harris, Laura, N.
 Plains Dist. (Peace, Council
 Bluffs, Iowa), Sept. 28, 2008

Placements

Abe, L. James, co-pastor,
 Carlisle, Pa., May 31
Abe, Marla Bieber, co-pastor,
 Carlisle, Pa., May 31
Berkey, Brian D., from team
 interim to team pastor,
 Jennersville, West Grove, Pa.,
 June 7
Betz, Russell W., from pastor,
 Antelope Valley, Billings,
 Okla., to pastor, Cerro
 Gordo, Ill., July 25
Criswell, Scott W., pastor,
 Stonerstown, Saxton, Pa.,
 June 1
Davis, Denzil, associate pastor,
 Oak Grove, Levels, W.Va.,
 June 1
Gong, Carolyn P., minister of
 new ministries, Prince of
 Peace, Littleton, Colo.,
 March 22

The art of hospitality

Any time I visit Manchester College and stay on campus, a card from Linda Richards awaits me.

"Welcome to Manchester College," the last one began. "We hope your stay here is a blessing. . . ."

Sometimes there are flowers waiting with the card. Sometimes it's a box of chocolates. Sometimes it's both.

Linda's full-time work is in the Indiana campus' library—for nearly four decades now—but she was tapped to help out with guests of campus ministries because she's a self-described "people person."



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

She reserves the rooms. She lines up parking passes and lets security know if there will be an extra car on campus. She gets all the necessary meal tickets and cares for the other details.

"I just try to do things that have been done for me," Linda says. "It's those little things that mean a lot.

"When you go someplace, you don't want to feel like you're alone," she adds. "You never know if a smile

or something happy can change someone's attitude for the entire day. That's really what it's all about."

I was struck in some recent experiences and in preparing this issue how much it's what the church is all about, too, in some of its better moments.

am prepared to express my love for others in very practical, down-to-earth ways."

The tricky part comes in extending such hospitality within our faith communities, especially when those who come to our doors are different than us, or have divergent ideas, or don't quite "fit" our way of doing things. It's one thing to extend hospitality to those who will leave in a few days or a week; it's harder when we say to someone, "Welcome to our community. You're one of us."

A few years ago in the Jesuit magazine *America*, Thomas Richstatter reflected on this issue for the church:

"If you wish to invite a guest into your home, you must have space. You have to 'make room,' " said Richstatter, professor of theology at St. Meinrad's Seminary in Indiana. "To invite others into our hearts and our worship, we must make room for them. The enemy of reverence is not hospitality but arrogance. . . . We must empty ourselves in order for the other to enter in. This is the difficult part of hospitality."

Abundant good workshops on hospitality are available, including some by our own denomination's Fred Bernhard and Steve Clapp. Few would argue it's an important call for the church. To make it reality, however, means releasing our prejudices, biases, "right of place," and countless other peccadillos.

It's the spirit of Paul's words to the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:19: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of

WELCOMING OF OTHERS MAY NOT REVERSE OUR DENOMINATIONAL DECLINE, BUT IT CERTAINLY CAN'T HURT. AND IT MAY, AS LINDA SAYS AT MANCHESTER, **CHANGE SOMEONE'S ATTITUDE OR EVEN SOMEONE'S LIFE**—WHICH IS ULTIMATELY A LOT MORE IMPORTANT TO THE CHURCH THAN NUMBERS IN THE PEWS.

- At the 30 camps spread across our denomination, a central part of their ministry is making campers and guests feel welcome, often for life-changing encounters with God.

- In his review of the book *Beyond Our Means* (p. 26), Frank Ramirez calls the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., a place gifted in "providing hospitality to anyone and everyone."

- Describing his recent trip to Nigeria (p. 16), Ben Barlow notes, "Everywhere, there was hospitality as we visited"—among both Muslims and Christians.

- And it is implicit in the love feast, as described by Jim Benedict (p. 19)—a ritual that he says sends the message, "I

the household of God." It's not just saying, "Make yourself at home," but, "You *are* home."

Being intentionally and wholly welcoming of others may not reverse our denominational decline, but it certainly can't hurt. And it may, as Linda says at Manchester, change someone's attitude or even someone's life—which is ultimately a lot more important to the church than numbers in the pews.

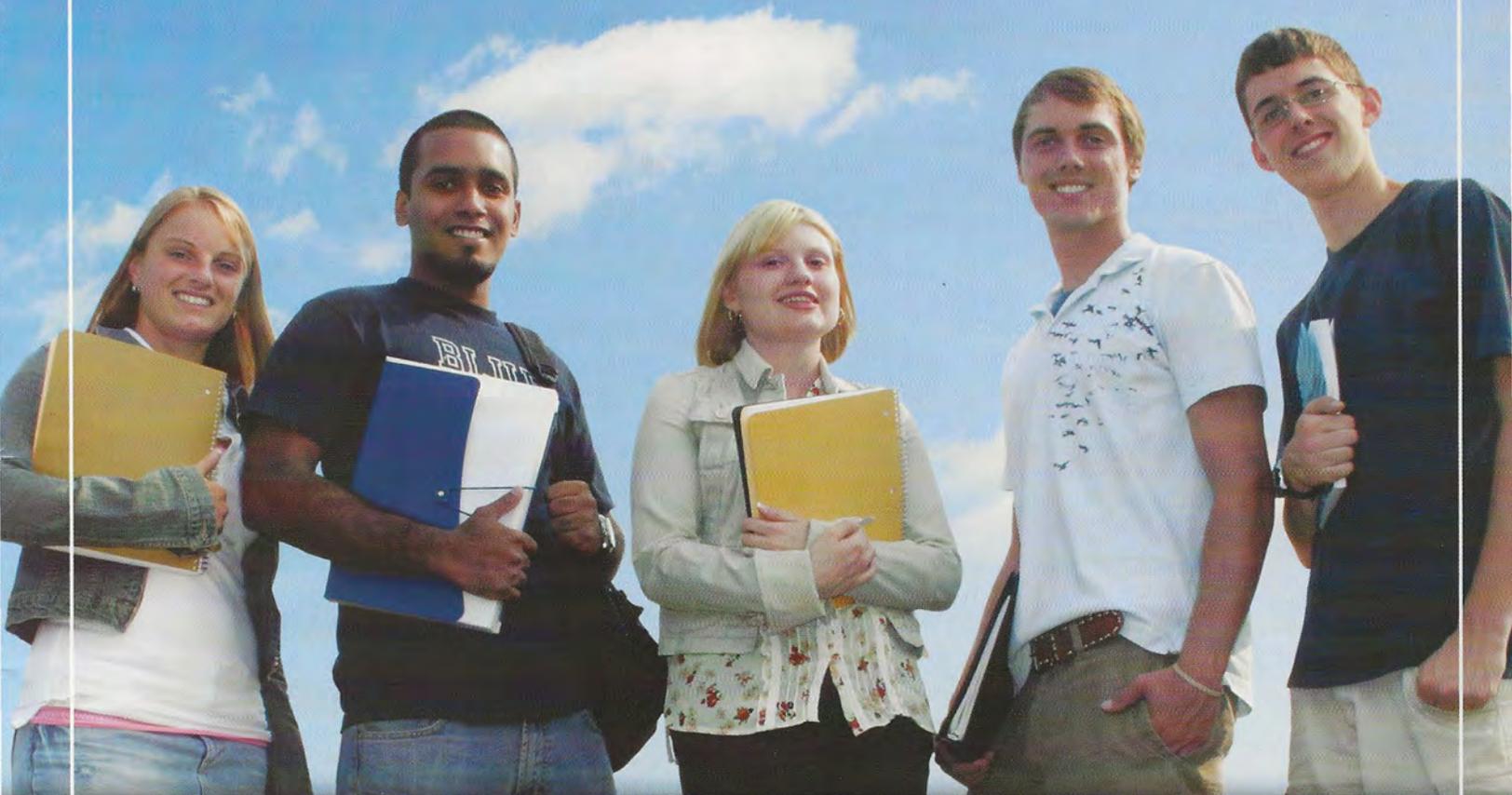
"The more I can do for (others), the more it makes me happy," Linda says. "God has blessed me in so many ways. Being kind is just part of the greatness of knowing God."

As we make space for God and for all God's children, may we each encounter and offer such kindness.—Ed. 

COMING IN NOVEMBER: What's happening with house churches, prison ministry, a profile of IMA executive Paul Derstine, Bible study on Jude, movie review, and more.

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