

Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

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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

Back in the '60s, The Beatles sang, "You say you want a revolution. Well you know, We all want to change the world." That desire still continues for many more than four decades later, and the infectious spirit of "good times revolution music" lives on in popular Brethren band Mutual Kumquat. Cover photo by Heidi Beck.

8 Some like it 'quat: A visit with Mutual Kumquat

Mutual Kumquat carries its Brethren roots into its music, and it has developed a dedicated following in parts of the denomination. As the band prepares to mark its 10th anniversary in 2010, it has a renewed focus and several new projects in the works.

12 Making a joyful noise

How could a small church choir be re-energized? Psalm 100 provided an answer.

14 Lighting a lamp for peace

The town of Taybeh is one of the few predominantly Christian towns remaining in Palestine. It shared with an ecumenical "Living Letters" delegation one of the ways it is keeping hope alive.

16 Revelation: An apocalyptic ending

Graydon F. Snyder says Revelation, with all its symbols and imagery, may be the most complex book in the Bible. It also represents the culmination of a pattern that runs through the Scriptures.

18 'Night Visitations' and more

Wally Landes and L'Cie Ramsay share poetic reflections on the Advent season.



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Editor's note: We apologize for the late arrival of our October issue in some areas. It was slowed slightly by some production delays, and then experienced significant waits for delivery in some ZIP codes. We are working with the postal service to address these concerns. Thank you for your understanding.

In an odd mash-up of news topics, one of the latest articles about the H1N1 virus reported concern that a sharp increase in cases could cause a crippling online traffic jam—that is, if an epidemic’s worth of people all stayed home surfing the Internet. In other words, our virtual selves could be laid low by an old-fashioned biological virus.

Anyone with a computer spends a fair amount of energy trying to weed out the digital kind of virus by adjusting spamcatchers and practicing safe surfing. Sometimes, though, I’m tempted to peek at a questionable e-mail, just in case it’s legit or because the subject line is intriguing.

That’s how I happened to lift the flap on one bizarre e-mail that turned out to be good for a laugh. I scrolled to the bottom, the place where a reputable sender would provide a way to opt out of future messages. This one, however, assured me that such an option was not necessary: “This is not a commercial email. This email is a public service announcement from Jesus!”



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Absurd as this claim seemed, I have to admit that I believe Jesus can issue a PSA any way he wishes. God is communicating through digital means just as surely as God has used the printing press or the scroll.

E-mail, blogs, websites, social media—they’re all potential ways to hear Jesus. They’re ways to use the language of the day.

That’s why the Church of the Brethren is now on Facebook. We need many ways to communicate. In a denomination weighted toward the upper end of the age spectrum, it’s noteworthy that one group within the church is almost a perfect bell curve. Using the age breakdowns of the social networking website (which skews the opposite direction of the Brethren), fans on the new Church of the Brethren Facebook page represent ages that are absent in many of our congregations:

- 13 to 17 years old: 12%
- 18-24: 17%
- 25-34: 20%
- 35-44: 17%
- 45-54: 18%
- Over 55 (over the hill in the Facebook world, apparently): 16%

A few other interesting details about these 1,500-plus fans: While most are in the US, a surprising number are in Canada. Brazil, the Dominican Republic, the UK, Spain, Kuwait, and the Philippines each has two or three, and there is one each from Albania, Austria, Australia, Germany, Ecuador, Haiti, Israel, Jamaica, Mexico, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Norway. The city with the most fans (57) is Roanoke. Other top cities are Chicago, Dayton, Harrisburg, Carlisle, Altoona, Indianapolis, Wichita, Philadelphia, and South Bend. (Trivia: While more than 99 percent use English, five of those have their pages set for “Pirate” English.)

What to make of all of this? Who knows? But sometimes being infectious is a good thing.

Wendy McFadden

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MESSENGER
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:
dstroyeck@brethren.org
Phone: 847-742-5100 ext. 247
Fax: 847-742-6103

Advertising:
messengerads@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039
Fax: 847-742-1407

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messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 263
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Something's fabulously fishy

Grants help congregation create special day



Nicholas Beam

Members of Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren and residents of Greenville Retirement Community watch children enjoy their new fishing poles at the retirement community's pond.

Pleasant Hill (Ohio) Church of the Brethren experienced a special day this summer in its worship and Vacation Bible School.

A member of the congregation acquired two grants through the Ohio Division of Wildlife—a "Passport to Fishing" grant and a "Step Outside" grant—that enabled a unique day at nearby Greenville Retirement Community. Pleasant Hill held its worship on the retirement community's "back forty," had lunch in its air-conditioned clubhouse, and did crafts and games in its shelter.

Through the "Passport to Fishing" grant, each child present received a fishing pole and reel, ready to use in the property's pond that had been stocked with 500 bluegills.

It produced an abundance of positive results, such as when many of the residents came out to watch the stocking of the pond, and watching the kids get so excited about their new fishing poles and the fish all ready to bite.

The theme for the worship and Bible school was appropriately taken from the words of Jesus in Matthew 4:19: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."—Nicholas Beam

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 Mid-Atlantic district conference in October included a workshop for ministers on "Transformational Leadership," led by Paul Munday and Doug Sider.... Western Pennsylvania held a pair of "inspirational services" on Oct. 18 leading up to its district conference.... Camp Swatara (Bethel, Pa.) held its annual Contributors Dinner Nov. 13, featuring the "Faithful Men" quartet.

Southeast Daleville (Va.) Church of the Brethren held a "Marathon Bible Study" for six hours on Oct. 24 to provide a quick study of the 66 books in the Bible.... Camp Bethel (Fincastle, Va.) netted more than \$30,000 from its 25th annual Brethren Heritage Day celebration on Oct. 3.... Atlantic Southeast District has co-signed a note for the Levittown church project in Puerto Rico to purchase a property including a fully furnished church building in Bayamon.

Midwest Chicago First Church of the Brethren held a "Raising the Roof for Youth" benefit concert to raise \$1,500 for an unexpected roof repair. Several local youth programs are housed in the church.... Manchester Church of the Brethren (North Manchester, Ind.) on Oct. 17 hosted a morning of district workshops following a keynote address by Bob Bowman.

Ozarks/Plains Western Plains District held its "Gathering V" conference Oct. 23-25 at the Webster Conference Center in Salina, Kan., on the theme "Transformed by Jesus to Make Disciples."... Northern Plains held a youth retreat Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at Camp Pine Lake (Eldora, Iowa) that included a service project to aid the camp and local outreach.

West Pacific Southwest District's policy board has set a goal of balancing the district's budget by the year 2011. The deficit topped \$3 million last year.... La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren held a groundbreaking service for its "Peace and Carrots" community garden on Sept. 6. It aims to increase community involvement, promote good stewardship of the earth, and grow good food to share.



YOU SAID IT

"A leader has to say God's words, whether they are heard or not."

—Dana Cassell of Oxford, Miss., Brethren Volunteer Service staff for Vocation and Community Living. She was leading a Bible study time on ministerial leadership during the fall meetings of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board.

BY THE NUMBERS

77

Median age of the 900-plus participants who attended this year's National Older Adult Conference in Lake Junaluska, N.C. The event is sponsored by Church of the Brethren Caring Ministries.



Julie Kaufman

Planting poles for peace: At least two congregations used this year's International Day of Prayer for Peace in September as an occasion to install a new peace pole on their property. In Pennsylvania, **Spring Run Church of the Brethren** in McVeytown dedicated its new pole following worship. Above, youth from the congregation display the various language panels to go on the pole (pictured are Spencer Mumper, Katie Mumper, Darcie Dunmire, Tori Stewart, Cody Dunmire, Chelsea Bilger, and Ryan Wilson, and back row, Taylor Stewart and Kenzie Dunmire), and then sisters Darcie and Kenzie Dunmire use a power drill to attach the signs.



Julie Kaufman

And in Indiana, **Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren** in Ashley had a festive celebration with singing, guitar, readings, skits, and making "stone soup" that was later shared. Below, Terry Wilson plants the pole in the ground as Phil Haynes and John Graft look on, and visitor Naomi Kurihara of Japan—who was delighted to find Japanese among the languages on the pole—buries some symbolic puzzle pieces at its base (below right). Members of the Cedar Lake and Cedar Creek congregations also took part. On Earth Peace reported that more than 125 Brethren congregations and groups participated in the observance of the day this year.



Kent Sweltzer



Kent Sweltzer

Persistence pays off richly for Wilmington outreach ministry

Wilmington (Del.) Church of the Brethren pastor Bob Vroon shares this story of how his congregation is endeavoring to live out the Great Commission:

"In January 2006, I was talking to the leaders of a local ministry to the poor. I asked them what was the biggest factor behind the poverty in our urban community. They immediately responded in unison: drug addiction. If only they could find a way to get people out of their addictions, they could probably help them out of poverty.

"I went back to our church and shared this with our evangelism commission. In time, we all came to feel God was leading us to establish a recovery ministry. After months of preparation, we started with four people who were in recovery (all church members or friends or family of church members), plus five staff. We started small, then got even smaller when two people dropped out. Still, we could see right from the start that it was a powerful ministry that God was using to change lives.

"We prayed and prayed and publicized the ministry in many ways, but for three months saw no community members come. Finally, one did come and kept coming back. She invited her friends, but none of them stuck. So here we were, with a heartfelt desire to reach people in our community with the healing power of Christ, and for the next five months we had just three people in recovery coming regularly.

"Then, all of a sudden, we had a breakthrough. Three more community members started to come regularly. They invited friends, and more came. Then the local rescue mission sent us four to eight men each week. So for the last two years we have had between 10 and 20 people in recovery who are coming regularly.

"This fall, we are celebrating the third anniversary of our recovery ministry. We have seen people come to Christ. We have seen people experience God's deliverance. And we are seeing some of them come to our church regularly. We are so thankful for what God is doing through this ministry. And we are so glad we persisted in the lean times." —**Bob Vroon**

LANDMARKS

• **Juniata College** (Huntingdon, Pa.) held a dedication and ribbon-cutting for renovated Founders Hall on Oct. 23. The hall, built in 1878, was the first building on the campus; it underwent a major \$8.5 million renovation over the past few years. The renovation included many "green design" features. A grand opening was held during homecoming weekend, Oct. 30-Nov.1.

• The **Atlantic Southeast District** conference held Oct. 9-10 at Arcadia (Fla.) Church of the Brethren began with a celebration of the 125th anniversary of the district. It also recognized **Jerry and Jan Eller** with the Gemmer Award for Peace Practices and moved Yahuecas Church of the Brethren in Puerto Rico from fellowship status to congregational status.

• **Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren** on Nov. 15 celebrated "50 years of new dawnings" at its current Sunset Avenue location. The day included a keynote message from Brethren scholar Bob Neff, a hymn sing, special music, and a time of recognition and remembrance.

• **Hiwassee (Va.) Church of the Brethren** held a note-burning service on Oct. 24 to celebrate paying off its fellowship hall addition.

• **West Charleston Church of the Brethren** (Tipp City, Ohio) broke ground on Oct. 18 for a new facility.

• **Four Mile Church of the Brethren** (Liberty, Ind.) celebrated its 200th anniversary Oct. 24-25 with music, a history presentation, and worship.

• **Common Spirit Church of the Brethren** (Minneapolis) celebrated its new fellowship status on Nov. 1 with a gathering at Open Circle Church of the Brethren in Burnsville, Minn. The event included entertainment by Northern Plains District musicians, a meal, and worship.

• **New Community Project's Sustainable Living Center** in Harrisonburg, Va., operated by Tom Benevento, recently received a \$5,000 national Journey Award from Mennonite Mutual Aid.

OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY 2010

OBERAMMERGAU TOURS

SPRINGTIME in HOLLAND, BELGIUM
and GERMANY (May 6-17)

LUTHERAN HOLY LAND TOUR (May 8-19)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE I with JOHN RUTH (June 1-14)

SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA
and ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)

PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)

ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE II
with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)

ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)

ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)

SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE III
with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)

THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

OTHER TM TOURS 2010

AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 4-16)

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ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 6-18)

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GRACE GOES TO PRISON

An Inspiring Story of Hope and Humanity

Melanie G. Snyder

An Inspiring Story of Hope and Humanity

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Any single rooms at the inn?

Luke's Gospel records for us a familiar part of the Christmas story: Mary, Joseph, and the new-born Savior of the world not finding a welcome in Joseph's hometown. Jesus' first crib was a rough-hewn feeding trough in a cave or a barn because, "There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

This time of year—as so many of us are preparing to host family and friends at our homes, reminiscing about Christmases past, and maybe rehearsing at church for a Christmas pageant or cantata—welcome, warm feelings, and hospitality are prominent concepts. A significant group of people, however, are not experiencing the Christian hospitality so many of us pride ourselves on: Young adults, especially single young adults, are increasingly leaving the church due to a lack of welcome.



NATE POLZIN

Churches can unintentionally be hostile places for single people. According to Barna Research Group, 26 percent of American adults have never been married. That group accounts for over a third (37 percent) of the unchurched in our country. Many factors contribute to this, but the painful reality is that single people are often marginalized in the church.

It is easy to see why churches choose to focus resources towards families, children, youth, and seniors, since these are the main constituencies of our congregations. However, some thoughtful consideration about the way we promote activities and the types of conversations we have and comments we make can go a long way towards expanding the welcome of our congregations.

One story that illustrates how innocent assumptions and comments can be hurtful to singles comes from my new wife, Mandy. Mandy was 32 when we married. During her young

THIS STORY IS FUNNY, BUT IT DOES POINT OUT HOW HARD IT CAN BE FOR SINGLE PEOPLE TO FEEL WELCOME IN OUR CHURCHES.

adulthood, she tried harder than most to find a church community in which she could work, worship, and fellowship. She would suggest new ministries, offered to lead Bible studies, and filled out the volunteer forms the churches required. Like most churches today, these churches failed to utilize her gifts and make her feel part of the body. They didn't know what to do with a single young adult who did not have children.

One day, she dragged herself to a new church, feeling self-conscious about walking in alone. She felt like whenever she would try a new church, people would look at her, wondering why she was alone and maybe feeling sorry for her. Mandy sat down in a pew beside another woman, and as the service started the pastor asked the congregation to stand and greet one another. The woman next to her turned, extended her hand, and asked, "Husband hunting?" Mandy stopped shaking her hand instantly, shocked that the woman

had dared to ask aloud what Mandy had always suspected people were thinking in their hearts.

"No," was the one-word response Mandy gave her. She withdrew her hand and returned to her seat, fuming. All sorts of thoughts ran through her mind. She wondered why she bothered to try one more church; she thought about how she must not belong in church as a single person. In the midst of her internal rant, she heard the pastor calling the congregation back together. He began to tell a story about how he had enjoyed the outdoors this past weekend while he was out—hunting. (In Michigan, the opening weekend of deer-hunting season is nearly a high holy time.) Mandy realized instantly that the woman was not asking her if she was at church hunting for a husband, but if Mandy's husband was out hunting like hers was. Mandy felt very sheepish, and is sure to this day that the woman must think she is some raving PETA supporter.

This story is funny, but it does point out how hard it can be for single people to feel welcome in our churches. Mandy assumed the woman was asking about her man-hunting intentions because Mandy, along with a large percentage of single adults, has been made to feel like there is something wrong with them by folks in the church. Jokes and comments that people intend to be funny or good-natured can, after years and years, start to mount up. Frequent attempts to "set up" single young adults from within the church family also contribute to a feeling of perceived incompleteness. Taken together, whether or not the single person actually feels any internal lack, churches can unintentionally create an inhospitable atmosphere when single folks feel that most church functions are going to contain some comment or circumstance that points out their singleness and difference, rather than their belonging-ness.

There are some things churches can do (and especially not do) to expand our welcome to those who have not yet found a place within our doors or at our tables. For example, do "couples showers" really have to be just for couples, or can single people come? Although children have a very significant place in the life

of our congregations, is it OK for a group of adults to get together without kids around sometimes? Do we really need to ask the single people, "So when are you going to settle down?" or "Are you dating anybody

yet?" When we preach a sermon series on family life, parenting, or marriage, can we expound on ways that people in every phase of life can apply the principles of the message?

For churches trying to reach out to people who don't currently attend a church, young adults are a great target group, since they make up such a large portion of the unchurched. Ideally, I think that any church in a college town should have a ministry to young adults. The talents, energy, enthusiasm, and conviction of this age group are a powerful addition to any church body. If a church doesn't have a large population of young adults nearby, perhaps instead of creating a new ministry those churches could at least eliminate some barriers, expanding their welcome to single visitors. This Christmas, let's make sure there is a hospitable place for everyone. **W**

Nate Polzin is interim district executive for Michigan District and pastor of The Church in Drive in Saginaw, Mich.

QUOTE WORTHY

“We’re so busy ‘doing’ that we don’t hear God or one another.”

—Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board member Chris Whitacre of McPherson, Kan., leading closing worship at the board’s October meeting. The meeting’s theme was “Hearers and doers of the Word.”

“There is no more important work than the study of God and all the ways human beings have attempted to experience and speak about that ineffable mystery.”

—Bethany Theological Seminary president Ruthann Knechel Johansen, giving an orientation address to new students at the school

“We grow up with a dream and a plan to achieve that dream, but when we let go of them and trust in God our lives turn out to be better than we could have ever imagined.”

—college student Christian Kochon of Marlton, N.J., a New Community Project (NCP) summer “solidarity worker” in Sudan, writing in NCP’s “As the World Turns” newsletter

“May we study anew what the Bible tells us about being followers of Jesus, and discover what God is asking of us today.”

—excerpt from a pastoral letter to the Church of the Brethren on the economy, sent in September by executives of the four major denomination-
al agencies. It identified additional resources available at www.brethren.org/economy.

“With God, you’re so much stronger than you could ever be by yourself. Any time I step on the field, I know I’m not alone.”

—University of Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford, speaking at his home church, United Methodist Church of the Servant in Oklahoma City. He was quoted by the *United Methodist Reporter*.

“Our capacity to clearly hear God’s voice is curtailed as we become too comfortable in our busy and overcommitted lifestyles.”

—Sharon Waltner, 2009 moderator of Mennonite Church USA, speaking in an interview with *The Mennonite* about concern areas for the church

“When there are comments that have been made that are inappropriate, incendiary, and insensitive . . . our words do damage, and it’s something that we don’t need.”

—Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay, commenting on his opposition to a bid from a group including broadcaster Rush Limbaugh to buy the NFL’s St. Louis Rams. He was quoted by ESPN. Limbaugh was later dropped from the bid.

CULTURE REVIEW

• The 2009 **Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** (ELCA) voted Aug. 21 in Minneapolis to open the ministry of the church to gay and lesbian pastors and other professional workers living in committed relationships. The action came by a vote of 559-451 at the highest legislative body of the 4.6 million-member denomination. Also at the assembly, by a vote of 958-51, the ELCA adopted a full communion agreement with the United Methodist Church (UMC). In 2008, the UMC General Conference adopted the same agreement.

• The US National Council of Churches Governing Board renewed its opposition to **proliferation of nuclear weapons** Sept. 21-22 as it unanimously adopted a statement titled “Nuclear Disarmament: The Time is Now.” NCC general secretary Michael Kinnamon said the idea for the resolution originated from a gathering of the historic peace churches in Philadelphia in January. It could become an NCC General Assembly resolution next month. For full text, see www.nccusa.org/pdfs/finalnucleardisarmamentresolution.pdf.

• The executive committees of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), meeting jointly for the first time, approved a draft constitution for a new organization to be called the **World Communion of Reformed Churches** (WCRC). Use of the word “communion” implies that member denominations of the new organization will accept the ordination of each others’ clergy and respect the rites of each tradition. It overcomes longstanding divisions among some churches. (WARC News)

• Stephen Colecchi, director of the Office of International Justice and Peace for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivered an **Interfaith Sudan Working Group** letter signed by 1,410 Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clergy at an October meeting with Joshua DuBois, director of the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. DuBois said that Sudan is a critical issue for President Obama and that faith groups play an important role in drawing attention to the ongoing tragedy there.



JUST FOR FUN: CRYPTOGRAM

A SONG IN THE AIR Using a simple substitution cipher, can you decrypt this verse from a familiar Christmas song? (Answer printed below.)

FRPH WR EHWKOHKHP DQG VHH KLP ZKRVH ELUWK WKH

DQJHOV VLQJ. FRPH, DGRUH RQ EHOGHG NQHH FKULVW,

WKH ORUG, WKH QHZERUQ NLQJ.

Answer: Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing. Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King (verse 3 from “Angels We Have Heard on High, No. 197 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*).

Clockwise from lower left, Ben Long, Jacob Jolliff, Chris Good, Drue Gray, and Seth Hendricks make up the current lineup of Brethren band Mutual Kumquat.



Heidi Buck

SOME LIKE IT 'QUAT

by Walt Wiltschek



Mutual Kumquat packs power in its music

Seth Hendricks and Chris Good sing and play guitar as Mutual Kumquat takes the stage.



Ben Green

Take a small, brightly colored piece of fruit. Add a very Brethren-sounding adjective. What do you get? A Brethren band that has become quite a phenomenon in parts of the church and beyond.

Mutual Kumquat, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2010, came together as many bands do: a bunch of guys in college—Manchester College in this case—getting together to jam and have some fun. One thing led to another, with some stops and starts along the way, and the band's unique, eclectic, Brethren-influenced sound took shape.

A decade later, the band has put out three CDs, most recently the self-titled *Mutual Kumquat* in 2008. It has played at National Youth Conference, regional youth conferences, Annual Conference,

"THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT WE HAVE TRIED TO USE MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR RAISING AWARENESS AND INSPIRING SOCIAL ACTION," GOOD SAYS. "THIS IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO."

Brethren college events, and a string of summertime Song & Story Fests. And it has developed a dedicated following along the way.

"Early on, I think we all knew we were a part of something special," says Chris Good, a songwriter/community organizer in Ann Arbor, Mich., and one of the band's original members. "The group grew so organically, and the feedback we got was so consistently positive, that at times we felt we were a part of something almost beyond our control."

Good, Nate Shull, and Ben Long formed the original trio that set things in motion. Seth Hendricks, Eric Stalter, Michael Good (Chris' brother), and Drue Jones joined the group soon after. The band's first CD, *Feel the Vibe*, came out in 2002. Other musicians came and went over the next few years, bringing both fresh sparks and continuity challenges as annual graduations shook up the band's active membership.

Mutual Kumquat faded away for a time, but Chris Good and Hendricks revived it, leading to a new album, *Dream on It*, in 2004. Another hiatus followed, then ended in late 2006, when Good,

Hendricks, and Jones (now Drue Gray) came together to play at the annual School of the Americas protest rally in Georgia. That sparked new energy for the band's vision, which is deeply rooted in social justice and change.

Songs on the latest album, for example, touch on topics including war, environmental sustainability, and gun violence.

"There is no doubt that we have tried to use music as a tool for raising awareness and inspiring social action," Good says. "This is at the heart of what we're trying to do."

Long, a percussionist who now lives in Sebastopol, Calif., and has rejoined the band, echoes that outlook. "Music can be such a powerful instrument for making social change," he says. "It can also be a powerful healing force in its ability to inspire and uplift, as well as in its ability to speak to the emotions and difficulties that can be faced when dealing with injustice."

That core message has been part of the band's appeal at Song & Story Fest, an annual event held just before or after Annual Conference at one of the denomination's camps. Ken Kline Smeltzer of



Ben Green

Mutual Kumquat plays on the main stage at the 2009 Song & Story Fest at Camp Peaceful Pines in California.

MOST OF US GREW UP IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHERN, AND IT HAS GIVEN US A SHARED BACKGROUND AND A COMMON CORE SET OF BELIEFS THAT HAVE BEEN AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE AS A GROUP.

Boalsburg, Pa., directs the fest, which is co-sponsored by On Earth Peace.

Mutual Kumquat has played at the last six Song & Story Fest gatherings, and several band members say that event has been a regular highlight. They hope to be there again in 2010, when the event is held June 27-July 3 at Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa.

Smeltzer says Mutual Kumquat adds "a nice, different element" to the fest as young adults and as a band with "a little more rocky beat" than many of the more folk- and bluegrass-oriented individuals and groups who perform. He also praises the spirit and the content of the songs they bring.

"They're dyed-in-the-wool Brethren, the new generation incarnation of Brethren values," Smeltzer says. "They're what we need to hear. I think they help us attract young adults, and the older folks enjoy it, too. People really enjoy Mutual Kumquat, and the guys are great. They caught the spirit of the fest."

In fact, the band's newest member, mandolin player Jacob Jolliff, connected with the group at one of the

festivals. And as for the Brethren values, the band's members agree that those have been an important influence in their journey.

"Most of us grew up in the Church of the Brethren, and it has given us a shared background and a common core set of beliefs that have been at the heart of what we have done as a group," says Hendricks, who is currently a student at Bethany Theological Seminary and a staff member at Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Clayton, Ohio. "Also, the Brethren world has been a great base of support for us over the years."

Then there's the music itself: an upbeat, rootsy, acoustic blend of bluegrass, jazz, funk, folk, some reggae tones, and more. It has featured guitars, mandolin, assorted drums and other rhythm instruments, and even a didgeridoo along the way. The band likes to call it "good times revolution music."

"We have such a blast together as a group that we really try to bring that genuine joyful and uplifting energy into our music and performances," Good says. "I think people really resonate with our onstage chemistry because it's



WHAT'S UP WITH THAT NAME?

For all the attention Mutual Kumquat's music has received, the band's name has generated nearly as much. The quirky moniker came in part because the original band members first began strumming and singing together one summer under a kumquat tree in California. It carries some symbolic meaning as well, however. Band member Chris Good says a brief "primer" on the name can be found in the lyrics of the band's song, "M.U.T.U.A.L.":

*Talking about love, talking about community,
Living this life tenderly.
Talking about hope and creativity,
Relationships built on MUTUALity.
Talking about sweet, talking about tart,
Talking about a revolutionary fruit, a KUMQUAT.
Tiny, but power-packed with flavor,
Grab a handful and share one with your neighbor.*



obvious that we truly love making music together.”

As former Michigan Peaceworks director Joel Eckel says in a review printed in the band’s flier, “Mutual Kumquat’s music is so alive... It’s rare to find a band that’s able to weave themes of social justice into music with so much talent and energy; music that speaks truth to power and gives power to the people.”

That combination of music, message, and energetic fun has given Mutual Kumquat strong popular appeal in some circles. The band has been booked to play at schools, congregations, coffee shops, witness events, and elsewhere.

A particularly full stretch came in 2008, when it did nearly 50 performances following up on the new CD, which was recorded, mastered, and produced by Drue Gray in Michigan. One of the album’s songs, “Looking Through These Pages”—penned by Good and Hendricks—received an honorable mention in the Great Lakes Songwriting Competition.

And while much of the music has a decidedly progressive bent, some—including at least one current project—draws on more traditional roots. The band is working on its first album of hymn arrangements, alongside another album of new original material.

Another big highlight already on the calendar for the 10th anniversary year is a return appearance at the Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference in Colorado in July.

“We’re excited to continue to connect with new audiences and see where it takes us,” Good says. “We’re also looking forward to integrating other forms of creative expression into what we do. We’ve begun leading more workshops and other music- and social justice-related activities, and are starting to focus more on working in

schools, churches, universities, and festival settings.”

It’s all part of a driving mission of the band: to use their gifts “to make this world a better place,” as Hendricks puts it. More than simple entertainment, it’s a form of empowerment.

And they credit their Brethren network with a key role in moving that mission forward.

“There have been times over the years that our fans, friends, and families within the Brethren community have helped keep us coming back together by getting us shows, inviting us to play at a wedding, or by getting us to help support their work by playing at a protest, rally, or benefit,” Good says.

“This has always been about community and grassroots support, and we feel blessed by how many friends and supporters we’ve met along the way.”

A decade after it all began, the good times revolution keeps rolling. **W**

Walt Wiltschek is editor of Messenger. He has heard Mutual Kumquat perform on several occasions.

LEARN MORE

Mutual Kumquat has a website at www.mutualkumquat.com, as well as pages on MySpace and Facebook and videos on YouTube. For more information, contact Chris Good at 734-395-0315 or chris@mutualkumquat.com.





MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE

by Rob Raker

PSALM 100 PROVIDED BASIS FOR RE-ENERGIZING A CHURCH CHOIR

When I took over as director of the choir at Greencastle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren in 2001 I had two ideas about what I was doing: little and none.

My training had been as a band director, and I had never given much thought to the possibility of directing a choir. Sure, my B.A. degree said that technically I could do the job, and I knew how to teach them the notes and rhythms, but beyond that I was lost. So I did what I usually do—relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and prayed a lot.

It was only a few weeks into the position when I sensed that the group needed

That was what I had been looking for—the unifier I needed. That night I announced to the group that we were now the “Joyful Noise Choir of the Greencastle congregation.” I had no idea how that Psalm would impact the next three years.

It had an impact on the musical selections I chose for the choir in two ways. First, it allowed me the freedom to choose music that might not be what some in the congregation, and choir, considered normal. Examples of this include “Sabbath Prayer” from *Fiddler on the Roof*, “Oh Happy Day” (the very Southern Gospel version complete with drum set and shout section), and many songs with hand clapping, foot stomping, and finger snapping—anything that I thought would instill some joy in our group, I tried.

Secondly, Psalm 100 gave me the freedom to choose music from a wide range of genres. We sang everything from Latin canons to Southern Gospel to classic

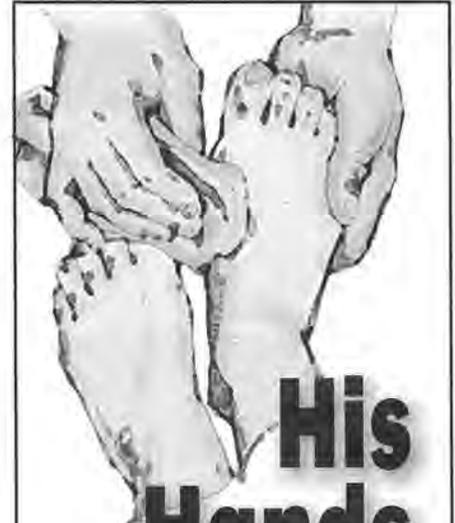
“ MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE TO THE LORD, ALL THE EARTH. WORSHIP THE LORD WITH GLADNESS; COME INTO HIS PRESENCE WITH SINGING. ” —PS. 100:1 (NRSV)

something to bring them together. Their numbers were dwindling, and on top of that their rehearsals were not much fun because they were adjusting to a new director and I was “growing into the job.” What I felt they needed was an identity.

One night I showed up for rehearsal an hour early and sat in the pew thumbing through the Bible, when the Holy Spirit moved me to look at a certain passage. It was Psalm 100, specifically the first two verses: “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful song” (NIV).

hymns to one rock song. I figured boredom was the enemy of joy, and therefore variety was what God was calling for.

One of the first areas of the choir this psalm impacted was our rehearsal times. I had decided early on to begin each session with a devotional, and this particular psalm lent itself perfectly to this application. I read a different verse at each rehearsal, after which we would meditate on that verse for a few moments. It brought us all together under one Spirit and allowed us to focus our efforts on the real reason for being there: joyful worship.



His Hands and Feet

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York, Pennsylvania
Saturday, March 6

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 - Deacons and Pastors: The Pastoral Care Team
- (Workshop topics may vary depending on location)

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and actions the more they desired the same joy. Zechariah 10:7 speaks of this very type of contagion: "The Ephraimites will become like mighty men, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. And their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the Lord."

Now again, please don't misunderstand. We worked to be the very best we could be at all times, but we were also realistic. With only half the members able to even read music, our chances of singing music perfectly was not great. And that was okay. We had decided to bring a joyful noise before the Lord and "enter his gates with praise and thanksgiving." The results would be left up to God, and God did some wondrous things.

On Sundays when we would sing, the choir gathered 15 minutes before the service to warm up. I tried never to let the choir go upstairs and into the service without a closing word of prayer that almost always thanked God for the privilege of using us as his instruments of praise that day. Again, it was a way of centering our attention on the true star of the show. I dislike referring to what we did on Sunday mornings as a performance or show, but I don't have a better word. We always made sure, though, that God was given all the credit.

Relying on God this way also freed up the choir from worrying so much about singing on Sunday mornings. As we progressed and saw God enable us to sing music thought to be too difficult, we gained confidence. With Psalm 100 as our banner we didn't have to rely on our own talent. "For the Lord is good, and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (v. 5). **W**

Rob Raker, who recently married and became the father of four adopted children, is now pastor of Trinity Church of the Brethren in Blountville, Tenn. He originally wrote this article for an "Interpreting the Psalms" Brethren Academy class taught by Bob Neff at Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.) in April.

Time was set aside during each rehearsal for story or joke telling. We had one member who always seemed to have a new, or old, joke to tell. This set-aside time also allowed us to "catch our breath" as musicians need to do during rehearsals, thereby serving a dual purpose.

Rehearsals were light and breezy. This type of atmosphere, I soon discovered, was perfect for my own style of leadership. I enjoy telling jokes, goofing around, and making people laugh. All of this was done, of course, while maintaining a modicum of respect and still accomplishing what we needed to at each rehearsal. There were those times when I had to be somewhat hard-nosed, but they were thankfully few and far between.

I would like to tell you that every night went smoothly, and that we always had fun and never had problems, but that would not be reality. There were times when the choir was stubborn and did not want to sing what I wanted to sing. There were times when I became stubborn and decided we were going to sing a song no matter what. And there were times when none of us was in the mood to sing. Such is the life of a human being.

Psalm 100's greatest impact, though, was probably in the area of recruiting. I mentioned that the choir's numbers had fallen off. When I began there were 12 people in the choir, and that number quickly shrank to nine. Once those nine began demonstrating the joy of the Lord to the rest of the congregation, however, our membership increased. People wanted to be a part of this joyous thing happening on Thursday nights, and we gladly welcomed all comers. I can't say we attracted the most talented people, but our motto was simple: "Psalm 100 says make a joyful noise, not a beautiful noise."

The process was really quite simple. Joy, like love, patience, and kindness is contagious. The more people saw the joy of the Lord being exhibited in our songs



LIGHTING A LAMP FOR PEACE

by Emma Halgren

WEST BANK TOWN HIGHLIGHTS PLIGHT OF PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

Its population may be dwindling, but the Palestinian village of Taybeh is striving to maintain normalcy in the midst of conflict, and hope in the midst of oppression.

Taybeh, 14 kilometers northeast of Ramallah, is one of the few predominantly Christian villages in Palestine. Like villages all over the West Bank, it is suffering as many of its people decide to emigrate, seeing no other choice given the economic and phys-

ical hardship they suffer under Israeli occupation.

In the 1960s the town had a population of 3,400. The population today is 1,300. Unemployment stands at around 50 percent.

But for Father Raed Abusahlia, priest of the Latin (Roman Catholic) church of Taybeh, the grim situation only adds urgency to efforts to empower the local people spiritually and economically, as he explained to an ecumenical World Council of Churches "Living Letters" delegation visiting the village earlier this year.

There are three congregations in the village: Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic. The congregations worship together at Easter and Christmas, and are all actively involved in local projects.

The Latin parish runs a school, a medical center, a hostel for pilgrims, and numerous church services and youth activities. These projects are designed to give the people hope, and a reason to stay in Taybeh, says Abusahlia.

It has also started a unique Peace Lamp Project that makes use of an abundant local product—olive oil—to promote peace and justice in the Holy Land.

WCC / Emma Halgren



Father Raed Abusahlia, Catholic priest in the village of Taybeh, presents a peace lamp to the Living Letters team.

DID YOU KNOW?

On Earth Peace and Christian Peacemaker Teams regularly sponsor peacemaking delegations to the Middle East, focusing on Israel and the Palestinian regions. The next delegation is scheduled to travel there Jan. 5-18. For more information, visit www.onearthpeace.org/programs/special/middle-east-peacemaking. A variety of resources are also available at the site.

Several of the Church of the Brethren colleges and Bethany Theological Seminary have also periodically offered tours to the Holy Land, along with some independent Brethren tour operators.

Children watch visitors to Aida, a Palestinian refugee camp located just north of Bethlehem by the "Separation Wall" that separates Israel and the West Bank.



WCC / Emma Halgren

The goal is to place a peace lamp, with accompanying olive oil and a small candle, in every church in the world, and in this way to encourage prayer and solidarity with the people of Palestine. The lamps are produced in a workshop in Taybeh, providing jobs to 20 young men and women. All revenue from the sale of the lamps goes to charitable organizations like the Caritas medical centre and Beit Afram, Taybeh's home for senior citizens.

In addition, around 50 young people ages 5 to 15 sing in the parish youth choir. The choir has produced a CD called "With One Voice"; in 2006, eight children from the choir participated in a musical tour of France, performing 14 concerts throughout the country.

Spreading the word

Around 100 groups of pilgrims visit Taybeh each year. Abusahlia says that visitors can play an important role in breaking down the stereotypes that exist about Israel and Palestine.

"Maintaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land is the responsibility of all the Christians in the world," he said. "When people visit, they can see that Taybeh is a place of peace. We encourage them to talk about Taybeh to their friends and family when they return home, and promote products like our peace lamps. That is the best sign of solidarity."

Nancy Adams, a member of the Living Letters team from the Scottish Episcopal Church, said the peace lamp that she took away from Taybeh was a powerful symbol of peace, and a reminder of the courage of the people she met there. She has already had opportunities to talk about her experience in Taybeh with church groups in Scotland, using the peace lamp as a focal point.

"I told them of many of the sorrows I had heard, seen, and experienced. But I was also able to share with them the joy of the inspirational work going on in Taybeh," she said.

Members of a World Council of Churches "Living Letters" team visit the Aida refugee camp with a staff member of the Jerusalem Interchurch Center, a member of the refugee camp staff, and a participant in the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.



WCC / Emma Halgren

"Another message I took home from Taybeh is that Christians, Muslims, and Jews working so desperately for peace depend upon the international community to reignite the flame of peace with justice for the people of Palestine and Israel."

Emma Halgren is a communications intern with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. She is a member of the Uniting Church in Australia.

PEACE TOURISM

Taybeh is one destination on the itinerary for the Alternative Tourism Group (www.atg.ps), a Palestinian non-government organization specializing in tours and pilgrimages that provide a critical examination of the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land.

It works to encourage tour operators to abandon exploitative mass tourism and to adopt practices that are beneficial for the local population. It seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people, and to contribute to the establishment of a just peace in the area.

The Alternative Tourism Group is part of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism, a network of organizations in the Holy Land working to overcome some of the difficulties and threats that the Israeli occupation poses to tourism, to promote a balanced and enriching experience for travelers, and to achieve a more equitable distribution of tourism revenue.

These organizations have developed a Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land, which provides guidelines both for travellers to the Holy Land and for the Palestinian tourism sector.



Revelation: An apocalyptic ending

**Complex book is filled with
symbols and imagery**

by Graydon F. Snyder

The canon of the Bible follows a particular pattern. It begins with the Creation (Gen. 1-2:4a). Although the Creation was good (Gen. 1:31), eventually humans failed to live according to the life God offered (Gen. 3:22-24). Through spokespersons like Moses, God made clear the directions for an obedient life (the Pentateuch).

But humans still failed to follow the will of God. Recognizing the Jews as the primary descendants of Adam, God then designated some key people (the prophets) to call for a lifestyle renewal among his people—for example, Isaiah 55:6-7:

*"Seek the LORD while he
may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that
he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will
abundantly pardon."*

However, the prophetic call to live a life of obedience to God never had an opportunity. In 596 BCE, Jerusalem

was captured by the Babylonians, and the Jews were sent into exile. While some Jews might find lives of personal satisfaction there, many realized they must exist in a world of turmoil and destruction. They could not change this evil world, but must wait for God to bring about an end time when the intended covenant existence would be possible.

Meanwhile, one writer, Daniel in the Hebrew Scriptures, writes of four beasts coming up out of the great sea—from the source of worldly chaos and destruction:

*"The fourth beast
shall be different from all
the other kingdoms;
it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break it
to pieces" (Dan. 7:23).*

Only after such massive demolition could God establish a new reign that would last forever. We speak of the book of Daniel as an "Apocalypse": a writing that reveals what will happen before the end time can be realized.

Jesus also spoke of the new reign coming, and, like Daniel, described

THE SLAUGHTERED (CRUCIFIED) LAMB IN REVELATION AS AN AGENT OF GOD'S LOVE AND NON-VIOLENT POWER UNDERMINED THE POWER OF THIS WORLD (ROME). THE LAMB BRINGS A NEW KIND OF LIFE.

Journey through the Word

the earthly annihilation that will precede the new world: wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and cosmic failures (Mark 13, "The Little Apocalypse"). We assume Mark wrote about 69 CE, a short time before the Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem.

After the destruction of Jerusalem apocalyptic writing became more intense (Luke, Matthew). The Book of Revelation, written about 98 CE, marks the final stage of biblical thinking (creation—fall—call to repent—world destruction—vision of the coming end time).

It could be said that Revelation is the most complicated book of the Bible. A major reason is the presence of so many symbols, like the Lamb, and so many numbers, like seven. The reader needs to remember these are symbols, not literal references.

The author, John, received his visions on the island of Patmos, off the coast of Asia Minor (1:9). Instructed by the multiple sevens, John wrote letters to seven churches in Asia Minor. The messages came from God, who could be described in terms of the biblical formula noted above: "from him who is and was and who is to come" (1:4), the Alpha and the Omega (1:8). Those in the churches were blessed if they heard what is written, for the end time is near (1:3).

Following the letters John shares the vision he is receiving. The message is found in a scroll with seven seals. No one is worthy to break the seals and read the message (5:1-3). Then John sees before the throne a Lamb that had been slaughtered. The 24 elders sang a new song about the Lamb—that is, an affirmation that the end time was present and the cosmic chaos near an end:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

The Lamb (obviously Jesus Christ) struggled with Satanic political powers: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon (Rome, at this time) the great. It has become a dwelling place of demons" (18:1). Fallen also are all those who depended on Rome's might: "the kings of the Earth"; "the merchants of the earth"; "the shipmasters and sailors" (18:9-18).

The symbolic use of the Lamb for Jesus Christ may be surprising to some. In the Hebrew Scriptures lambs are helpless creatures who need constant assistance (e.g., "The Lord is my shepherd," Psalm 23).

But that meaning of lambs changes in the New Testament. Jesus can be identified as the Passover lamb whose blood saved Jews in exile (1 Cor. 5:7-8). More pertinent to the Lamb of Revelation, however, is the announcement regarding Jesus by John the Baptist in the Gospel of John: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The slaughtered (crucified) Lamb in Revelation as an agent of God's love and non-violent power undermined the power of this world (Rome). The Lamb brings a new kind of life.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (21:1-5).

The end of the biblical message as seen in Revelation 21 is astounding. The world will not be simply a renewed way of life (the prophetic way), but will be a new heaven—a new way of knowing God and living as God had intended. God will be present with us, and the earthly pain described in the apocalypse will be washed away: a marvelous "good news" for many of us as Christians.

To be sure, others of us also follow the words of Jesus, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." We believe our task is to strive for peace and justice, and work for a world that knows the will of God. As we come to the end of the Bible we realize both Gospels are present. 

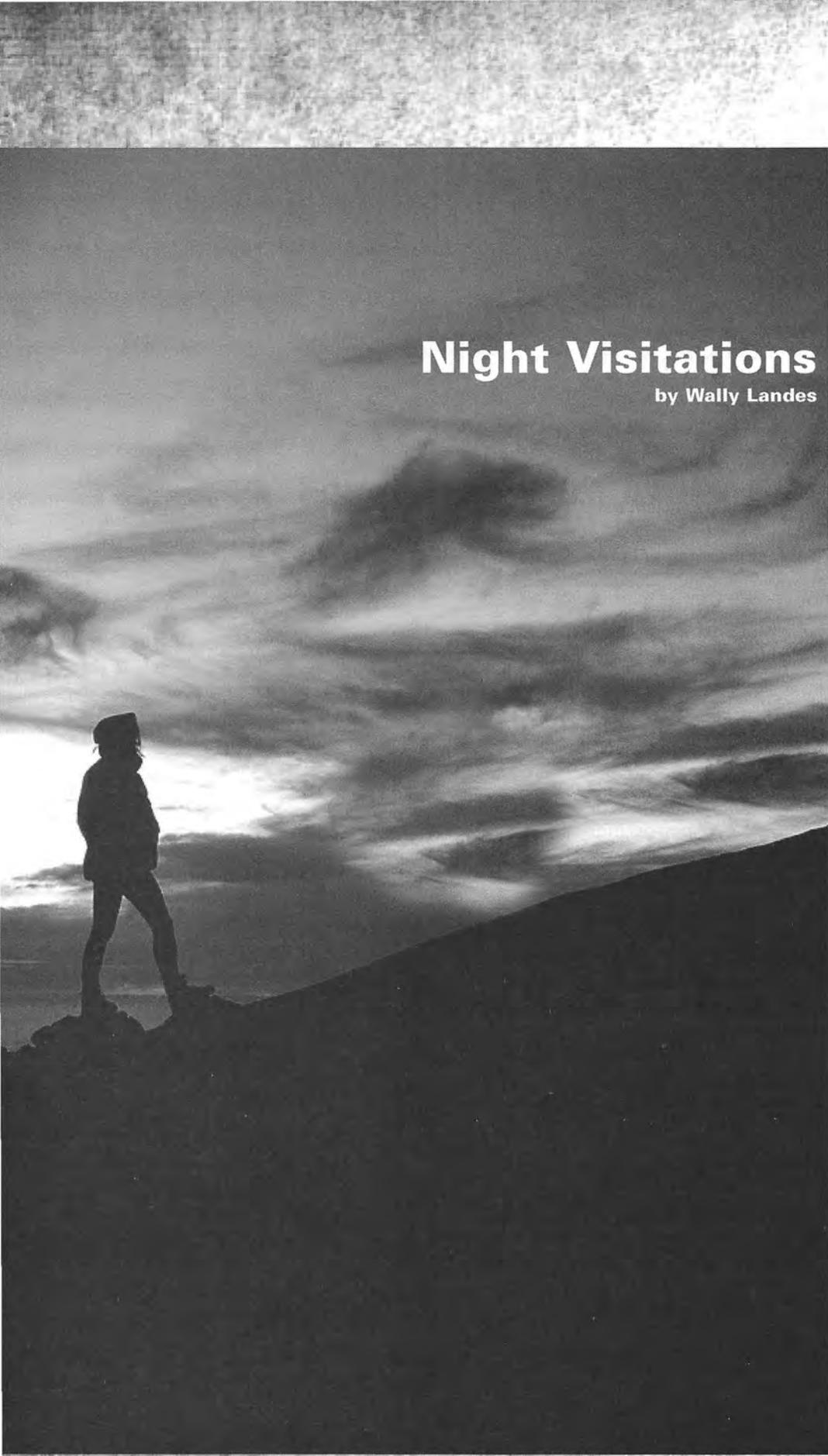
Graydon F. Snyder is a former professor at Bethany Theological Seminary. A member of Chicago First Church of the Brethren, he lives in Chicago.

MESSENGER's "Journey through the Word" series, which has provided a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month since January 2005, comes to an end with this issue. In January 2010, MESSENGER begins a year-long study of wisdom literature in the Bible, by Bob Neff.

REVELATION: A CLOSER LOOK

Author and background: The book of Revelation was written by a certain John from the island of Patmos. Other than that we cannot identify the author. The book was written late in the first century, perhaps the last of the New Testament writings. Often referred to as the Apocalypse of John, it follows the literary style of Daniel 7-12 and Mark 13.

Well-known texts: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (4:8b); "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (4:11); "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:1-2).



Night Visitations

by Wally Landes

By night Joseph slept
disturbed by the word
of one who spoke for the One
Do not be afraid to marry Mary
whose womb the Spirit has filled

By night they tended flocks
eyes weary from counting sheep
blinded by radiant glory
ears weary of bleating startled
tidings of great joy, not fear

By night he came this Pharisee
wanting yet fearing to believe
only to pose a few questions without
betraying his native faith
Nicodemus perplexed by new birth

By night he came with silvered purse
pursed lips to plant upon the Beloved
the kiss of death for not one but two
himself a victim of folly and fear

Still night they came to the womb of God
only to find it barren of Him
whom Life begat and begot again
finding instead that light which
forever dispels darkness

By night we wait and watch and pray
yet hoping peace will come on earth
with good will to all and who knows
what this night will bring except
the one who made it

Wally Landes is pastor of Palmyra (Pa.)
Church of the Brethren.



Church Bells at Christmas

by L'Cie Peirce Ramsay

It's Christmas time!
It's Christmas time!
I hear the church bells say
And as I hear them pealing
My thoughts are far away.

I seem to hear the angels
Their lovely Carols sing
And see the Shepherds searching
To find their baby King.

The night has been so quiet
As they their vigil keep.
Upon the mountainside they tend
Their flock of erring sheep.

When Lo! there up above them
A brilliant star appears,
And with the mounting of the star
They feel the press of fears.

The glory of it fills them.
They, too, must see the King.
They, too, must travel by the light
Their sacrifices bring.

In my mind I am traveling
Beside the shepherds now;
And likewise as I journey
I am with love endowed.

I wish that I could hurry
Impatient now I grow;
I want to kneel beside Him,
His wondrous grace to know.

We're shouting "Hallelujah"
And singing hymns of praise;
As mighty choirs of angels,
Their constant triumph raise.

"What think ye of it, brothers?"
They asked in reverence new.
And there in little Bethlehem
They found the Christ child, too!

Fall down and worship Jesus
Our King and Savior, Aye!
And bring our gifts to serve Him
For this is His birthday.

It's earth's first Christmas morning
And Mary, mother mild,
Still sits beside the manger
And ponders over her child.

"It's Christmas time! It's Christmas time!"
The church bells clearly ring.
From ancient dreaming I return
To think what I could bring.

I'm glad, although I was not there
To have a faith that's true.
To feel my worship not in vain
As many people do.

It's Christmas time! Glad Christmas time!
I too rejoice and sing,
Because with all believers,
I homage pay my King.

L'Cie Ramsay is a resident of the Bridgewater (Va.) Retirement Community and a member of Bridgewater Church of the Brethren. She originally wrote this poem in 1953 and continued to write poetry regularly for many years after.

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UPCOMINGEVENTS

Dec. 6 Church of the Brethren Advent Offering emphasis; Brethren Press winter curriculum quarter begins

Jan. 5, 2010 National Youth Conference registration opens

Jan. 6-18 On Earth Peace Middle East delegation to Israel/Palestine

Jan. 9-30 Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships Nigeria workcamp

Jan. 24-Feb. 12 Brethren Volunteer Service winter unit orientation, Gotha, Fla.

Jan. 25 Church of the Brethren youth/young adult workcamps registration opens

Feb. 1 Ministry Summer Service applications due

March 13-15 Mission and Ministry Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

March 18-20 On Earth Peace board meeting, New Windsor, Md.

In the consensus model used by the board, members use colorful cards to show their feelings about various agenda items.

Mission and Ministry Board addresses finances, vision

The Church of the Brethren's Mission and Ministry Board met Oct. 15-19 at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., with the theme "Hearers and Doers of the Word," based on James 1:16-25.

The board adopted a budget for 2010; adopted new vision, mission, and core values statements; adopted a revision of corporate by-laws; and adopted a Resolution Against Torture. Other major work at the meeting included a job evaluation for general secretary Stan Noffsinger and renewal of his five-year contract.

The budget approved by the board anticipates total income of \$9,488,760 and expense of \$9,807,100 for all Church of the Brethren ministries in 2010, representing a net expense of \$318,340. That includes a Core Ministries budget of \$4,962,000 of projected income and \$5,342,930 of projected expense, with a net expense of \$380,930.

Along with the 2010 budget the board also approved a statement calling on the general secretary "to initiate development of a long-range strategic plan . . . that matches income and expense for the core budget beginning in 2011, using consulting help as needed" and that "this plan be based on a series of income enhancement and cost reduction studies to explore new options." The plan is to be presented to the October 2010 meeting of the board for approval.

The executive committee was "of a mind that we resist more cuts at this time," board chair Dale Minnich told the board as he reflected on approving a deficit budget. The decision may represent postponement of further cuts in staff, salaries, and benefits, but it also may give time for the exploration of options "to be in a better place a year from now," he said. "Something needs to happen . . . that will address income and expense so we don't just keep sliding down the slope."

Vision and mission

In other business, the board engaged in several sessions of "table talk" in small groups as it gave input for new vision, mission, and core values statements. Heading the new document is the vision statement: "The Mission and Ministry Board envisions the Church of the Brethren wholly engaged in the reconciliation of all people to God and to each other."

A three-paragraph mission statement calls the board to extend the church's witness around the world, care for the whole fabric of the community of the Church of the Brethren, and support congregations "in their task to create joyful communities of faith that proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, cultivate discipleship, respond to human need, and make peace."

Eight core values of the board are described with one short phrase each: Christ-likeness, servant leadership, discernment, community, stewardship, simplicity, hospitality, and peacemaking.

In other business

• A "Church of the Brethren Resolution Against Torture" was adopted after lengthy discussion and numerous revisions to a document originally presented by a small group of board members and staff. The resolution will be passed on to the 2010 Annual Conference for its consideration.

• The Intercultural Advisory Committee met concurrently with the Mission and Ministry Board and presented a report from an intercultural survey of selected denominational leaders. A primary motivation for the study was the mandate of the 2007 Annual Conference statement "Separate No More" for intercultural ministry in the Church of the Brethren. Ruben Deoleo, director for Intercultural Ministries, led the advisory committee in the study and has



provided the primary oversight for it.

• A highlight of the reports received at the meeting was a presentation on **work against hunger in North Korea**, given by Pilju Kim Joo of Agglobe Services International and Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund manager Howard Royer. Through annual grants and other efforts, the church is supporting four farm cooperatives in North Korea, in partnership with Joo's nonprofit agency. In addition, the church has been invited to help provide faculty to teach at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, which has just opened outside the North Korean capital city of Pyongyang. The university is a unique venture made possible through cooperative work by faith-based groups with the countries of North and South Korea. Joo emphasized her indebtedness to the Church of the Brethren, which has been working with Agglobe Services International since 1997.

• The board approved a revision of the **Church of the Brethren corporate by-laws** to bring to Annual Conference for

approval next year. The revision was made necessary by the creation of Church of the Brethren Inc. as a new entity merging the former General Board, the former Association of Brethren Caregivers, and functions of the former Annual Conference Council.

• An update was given on **trustee appointments in India**. The Church of the Brethren continues to hold responsibility to appoint trustees for church properties that formerly belonged to the Brethren mission in India. On July 29, in a conference call, the board had received an update on legal developments in India, recalled commitments to continue in relationship with both the Church of North India and the separated India Brethren group, and approved a resolution appointing Darryl Raphael Sankey of Valsad, India, to the trust. Noffsinger reported the action to the board because a small number of members were not able to be part of the conference call.

• A **time of blessing** closed the meeting. Board members, staff, and guests were invited to express silent blessings for eyes, ears, hearts, and hands to hear and do the Word.

Annual Conference seeks stories to illustrate theme

Stories related to the theme of the 2010 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, "Taking Jesus Seriously" (John 14:15), are sought for presentations during the Conference next year, July 3-7 in Pittsburgh, Pa. A letter from moderator Shawn Flory Replogle to district and congregational leaders requested submission of the stories "as a way of challenging and inspiring us to consider the theme."

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee is looking for stories that may represent a moment of selfless action or a lifetime's commitment to a cause of the Gospel; they may be about one person, a congregation, a district, an agency, or an organization. "We are interested in stories that span the diversity of our denomination: theologically, geographically, generationally, and more," Replogle wrote. "The aim is to include those stories of faith and testimony throughout our time together in Pittsburgh, celebrating God's good work among us."

A brief synopsis of stories and contact information for follow-up should be sent as soon as possible to the Annual Conference Office, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or cdouglas@brethren.org. Stories will be considered based on the availability of time at Annual Conference.

The moderator also issued a general invitation to attend the 224th recorded Annual Conference, and to hold all aspects of the Conference in prayer. Visit www.cobannual-conference.org for more information.

• The **Special Response Resource Committee** created by the 2009 Annual Conference met for the first time Oct. 12-13 in Elgin, Ill. This committee was asked to develop a study guide and resource list for congregations, districts, and the denomination to discuss two documents related to sexuality that came to the 2009 Conference: "Statement of Confession and Commitment" and the query on "Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships."

The Conference requested that the committee complete its work no later than April 1, 2010. Members are John Wenger, chair; Karen Garrett, recorder; James Myer; Marie Rhoades; Carol Wise; and Standing Committee liaison Jeff Carter. The committee will post occasional updates at www.cobannualconference.org/special_response_resource.html.

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Congregational Life, seminary, districts utilize webcasts

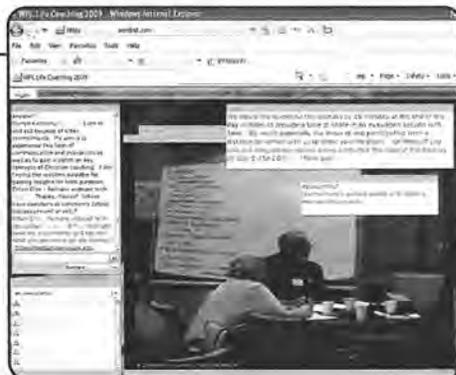
Webcasts (right) were done of presentations at three district meetings with the help of the Transforming Practices office of Church of the Brethren Congregational Life Ministries and Bethany Theological Seminary's electronic communications office.

The webcasts were offered from a Christian coaching training event led by Jane Creswell in Western Plains District on Oct. 12-13, plenary sessions and worship at the "Gathering V" conference in Western Plains District Oct. 23-25, and presentations by Diana Butler Bass and Charles "Chip" Arn at Pacific Southwest District Conference Nov. 6-8.

The webcasts and more details are at <http://bethanyseminary.edu/webcasts>.

Ministers Association plans 2010 pre-Conference event

Officers of the Church of the Brethren Ministers Association held their annual planning meeting Aug. 26-27 at the church's General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The group spent time evaluating association activities and planning for next year's



Courtesy of Stan Duack

continuing education event, which will once again take place ahead of Annual Conference, July 2-3 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

The presenter for the 2010 event will be Nancy Ferguson, a Presbyterian minister, author, and certified Christian educator. Her topic will be "Faith Forming Outside the Box." Advance registration fees will remain \$60 for individuals and \$90 for couples, with one-half-off discount registration fees for first-time participants. Online registration will be available again.

The Ministers Association officers include chair Nancy Fitzgerald of Arlington, Va.; vice chair Sue Richard of Lima, Ohio; vice chair Chris Zepp of Bridgewater, Va.; and treasurer Rebecca House of Union Bridge, Md. Mary Jo Flory-Steury, executive director of Ministry for the Church of the Brethren,

also met with the group. The officers at this meeting also welcomed Dave Kerkove of Adel, Iowa; he replaces newly confirmed officer Myrna Wheeler, who is unable to serve due to illness.

Plea bargain closes case on BVS orientation episode

A plea agreement was reached in criminal charges brought against a young woman for an incident that took place while she was in the fall 2008 orientation unit of Brethren Volunteer Service.

Charges of first-degree murder and child abuse resulting in death had been brought against Melanie Blevins of Westminster, Md., who during the orientation checked into a hospital and was discovered to have given birth. After she told police the baby was stillborn, they found the body of the child in a trash bin outside the building where the orientation unit was staying in Baltimore.

On Oct. 13, Blevins pled guilty to involuntary manslaughter and was given a 10-year suspended sentence with five years probation, ordered to perform 900 hours of community service over the next three years, and to continue in psychiatric care.

Numerous new Brethren grants support worldwide relief efforts

Brethren Disaster Ministries has been responding to a variety of recent disaster situations, including issuing grants for relief work following a series of earthquakes in Indonesia and sending a Children's Disaster Services (CDS) team following flooding around Atlanta.

Two major earthquakes hit Indonesia in September, causing widespread damage and killing at least 700 people, and a tsunami swept over the South Pacific's Samoan Islands late in the month.

Disaster staff have been monitoring both situations through Church World Service, a long-time ecumenical and international partner. CWS Indonesia staff reported that the level of damage in the earthquake that hit the island of Sumatra at the end of September was "far worse" than the Sept. 2 earthquake that rattled West Java. CWS has been responding to both earthquakes, providing non-food relief items such as family tents, blankets, and relief kits.

An initial allocation of \$15,000 was given from the Church of the Brethren's Emergency Disaster Fund to CWS for work in West Java, and \$69,000 was sent for Sumatra in mid-October. The grants are helping to pro-

vide a variety of supplies and shelter for those affected.

In the Atlanta metro area, severe flooding affected thousands of families. Judy Bezon, CDS associate director, coordinated a week-long response in Marietta with a team of six volunteer caregivers. The team provided care for more than 100 children affected by the floods. A grant of \$4,000 is aiding relief efforts.

Other recent grants have gone to American Samoa (\$10,000), the flood-ravaged Philippines (\$20,000), flood response following typhoons in Cambodia (\$15,000), and humanitarian response in Pakistan (\$40,000). Most of the work is being coordinated through Church World Service. A recent \$7,500 grant supports work by IMA World Health in southern Sudan.



ACT International

Factory works clear rubble in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Church of the Brethren grants are aiding ACT International/Church World Service relief work in the region.



Courtesy of BVS

BVS Unit 286: Brethren Volunteer Service held orientation for volunteer Unit 286 this fall in New Windsor, Md. Volunteers, their hometown or home congregation, and their project assignments are as follows: **Front row, left to right:** Chris Kollhed, Worspwede, Germany to Project PLASE, Baltimore; Steve Schellenberg, Terre Haute, Ind., to Brethren Disaster Ministries, New Windsor, Md.; Dominik Geus, Leverkusen, Germany, to Brethren Nutrition Program, Washington, D.C.; Jill Piebiak, Valleyview, Alberta, Canada, to World Student Christian Federation, Budapest, Hungary; Beth Merrill, staff. **Middle row:** Lea Ernst, Wuppertal, Germany, to Bridgeway, Lakewood, Colo.; Cheryl Stafford, Oakland Church of the Brethren (Gettysburg, Ohio), to Kilcranny House, Coleraine, Northern Ireland; Dassie Puderbaugh, Rochester Community Church of the Brethren (Topeka, Kan.), to Family Abuse Center, Waco, Texas; Marcus Dombois, Kassel, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Jesse Bradford, Lacey Community Church of the Brethren (Olympia, Wash.), to International Community School, Decatur, Ga.; Anne Wessell, Spring Creek Church of the Brethren (Hershey, Pa.), to Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren; Katie Baker, Piney Creek Church of the Brethren (Taneytown, Md.), to Talbert House, Cincinnati; Sebastian Peters, Andernach, Germany, to The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Need, Frederick, Md. **Back row:** Linda Propst, Staunton (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to Cross Keys Village, New Oxford, Pa.; Laura Dell, Holmesville (Neb.) Church of the Brethren, to Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren; Callie Surber, staff; Don Knieriem, staff; Mathias Firus, Ramstein, Germany, to Project PLASE, Baltimore; Marcel Irintchev, Bonn, Germany, to Brethren Nutrition Program, Washington, D.C.; David Jamison, Roanoke (Va.) Central Church of the Brethren, to Hadley Day Care, Hutchinson, Kan.; August and Jutta von Dahl, Bell, Germany, to Meeting Ground, Elkton, Md.

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'God With Us': A call to real discipleship

Book builds broad case for reassessment on Brethren ideals

Full disclosure: I went to seminary with Jeff Neuman-Lee, author of the extraordinary *God With Us*, subtitled *The Biblical Message of Jesus: Life in the Spirit, Not in Religion*. And it's a seminary memory I want to call to mind with regards to this book. It was in the spring of 1978 on the old campus of Bethany, in Oak Brook, Ill. We had survived a



FRANK RAMIREZ

brutal winter, the snowiest on record, and when the warm weather finally arrived the melt created a brand new lake on campus.

Warm winds blew all around us, and it was hard to concentrate on studies. Most of us were content just to enjoy the green, but Jeff and his wife, Judi, seized the day with gusto and pulled their canoe out of storage. There they were, taking advantage of today's miracle, paddling on a lake that would not exist tomorrow. That sense of delight and wonder was typical of Jeff's belief in

a bountiful God and his approach to ministry as well.

God With Us challenges the people of God to expect God, to

gests—is already with us, in our midst.

I first read this book in manuscript a couple of years ago while spending a week in Yosemite National Park in preparation for our daughter's wedding. Despite the distractions of what I consider to be the most beautiful spot on earth, I couldn't put the book down.

In recent years part of the church has become obsessed with political power. Some have grown disillusioned when it became evident that politicians were using well-meaning Christians for their own ends. Jeff makes it clear that God is not a party or a policy or a nation or a convenient confirmation of our prejudices. God is real. God is with us. God is made known through Jesus. God expects us to love each other as we are loved. Real disciples will love each other as they love God. That's how we'll be known.

Real discipleship will result in a commitment to peace, to simplicity, and to community: Brethren ideals in a book directed to the whole Christian community. The map for this lifestyle comes from taking scripture seriously, rejecting literalist proof-texting. Instead God's people interpret the Bible together. Perhaps discovering what the Bible means is more important than imagining one is defending a Word of God that needs no defending. In the end, the work of God is not

JEFF MAKES IT CLEAR THAT GOD IS NOT A PARTY OR A POLICY OR A NATION OR A CONVENIENT CONFIRMATION OF OUR PREJUDICES. GOD IS REAL. GOD IS WITH US. GOD IS MADE KNOWN THROUGH JESUS.

believe God is active in history, and that God's word should be taken seriously but not solemnly. *God With Us* asks the question, "What would the church be like if we really tried to live like Jesus, and to treat each other as if we all bore the image of God?" *God With Us* invites us to walk together, step by step, through the implications of what it means to be disciples.

But this is not a staid and stale theological tome. It's a warm, human, intelligent yet intelligible book that suggests not only is it possible to live biblically, but it's also a very good idea.

To ground the book in practical reality, each chapter begins with a story involving Jeff, his family and friends, and canoeing. The great outdoors provide a lab for testing a way for people to live with God, who—as the title sug-

gests—all that difficult. It flows naturally because God is with us.

Life in the Spirit is real life. And because of grace we can stumble a bit as we learn to live this life, even as false starts and wrong turns in canoeing adventures can still end up on the right path, with God in our midst.

This is not a book about religion. It's a book about Christianity. That means it is a book about delight: delight in the world around us, delight in each other, delight in God. And it's a great one for those committed to engaging in serious—and fun—Bible study. **W**

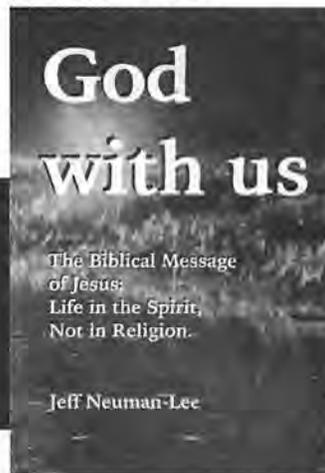
Frank Ramirez is pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and a prolific author.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *God With Us*. **Author:** Jeff Neuman-Lee. **List price:** \$17.95. **Pages:** 258.

To order: The book can be ordered from Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 or directly from the publisher at wwwcreatespace.com/3375484.

Notes: Neuman-Lee, an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, is currently working with an urban church plant in Denver, Colo., for Western Plains District.



ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Bridgewater held a meal to support Church World Service's CROP Hunger Walks on Oct. 22. Students gave up their cafeteria meals so they could be sold to community members as a fundraiser. Numerous students and staff also participated in the local CROP Walk on Oct. 25.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Dr. Marcus Meier, a research fellow at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, delivered a lecture on "The Schwarzenau Brethren: Anabaptist Dissent in the Context of Pietism" at the college's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies on Oct. 29. The lecture was based on Meier's recent book, *The Origin of the Schwarzenau Brethren*, which received the 2009 Dale Brown Book Award.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Rebecca Miller Zeek, pastor of 28th Street Church of the Brethren in Altoona, Pa., has been named to the Juniata College board of trustees for a three-year term that will expire in September 2012. . . . Sir Ken Robinson, an internationally recognized leader in the development of creativity and innovation, spoke at Juniata on Nov. 3.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The Sara & Michael Abraham Campus Center officially became part of the La Verne landscape on Sept. 10 with a festive opening ceremony. The three-floor building includes a conference center, cafe', and office space.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester will begin the accreditation process for a School of Pharmacy in nearby Fort Wayne, after unanimous approval was given by its board of trustees on Oct. 17. The college plans to enroll its first students in the four-year Doctor of Pharmacy program in fall 2012.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson increased its enrollment for the sixth consecutive year this fall, with a 2009-2010 enrollment of 542 students, up from 509 a year earlier. That includes a freshman class of 137 plus 60 transfer students. Enrollment had fallen to under 400 in 2003.

Workcamp ministry focuses on junior high in 2010

Workcamps offered by the Church of the Brethren Youth/Young Adult Ministry Office in 2010 will have the theme "With glad and generous hearts," drawn from Acts 2:46. Online registration opens on Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. Central Time at www.brethren.org.

Twelve workcamps are planned for this coming summer, with a focus on junior high events because it is a National Youth Conference year for senior high youth. Dates and locations are as follows (registration fee is \$245 unless otherwise indicated):

Junior high workcamps are planned for Elgin, Ill., June 16-20; Brooklyn, N.Y., June 23-27; Indianapolis, June 23-27; Ashland, Ohio, June 28-July 2; Roanoke, Va., July 28-Aug 1; Harrisburg, Pa., Aug 2-6; and Richmond, Va., Aug 3-7.

Senior high workcamps sponsored by the Brethren Revival Fellowship are planned for the Dominican Republic June 20-27 (\$695) and for Reynosa, Mexico, July 31-Aug 7 (\$595).

An intergenerational workcamp for ages 11 and up, co-led with On Earth Peace, will take place at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., June 14-19 (\$295). A young adult workcamp will go to Haiti May 23-30 (\$695).

And a "We Are Able" workcamp for intellectually disabled youth and young adults, and youth and young adult service partners, will be offered in New Windsor, Md., June 28/29-July 2 (\$350).

For more information visit www.brethren.org/workcamps or contact cob-workcamps@brethren.org or 800-323-8039 ext. 286.

Bits and pieces

• Siblings David Meadows and Virginia Meadows will serve as music coordinators for the 2010 **Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference** (NYC). David Meadows is assistant director of alumni relations for Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa. Virginia Meadows is former program director at Camp Blue Diamond in Petersburg, Pa., and has led music at several denominational young adult conferences. They will be assisted by others on stage, and Shawn Kirchner



Emily LaPrade

From left, Jim Chinworth, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Tracy Stoddart, and Dave Steele are serving as worship coordinators for the 2010 National Youth Conference.

of La Verne, Calif., has been commissioned to write the 2010 NYC theme song. The NYC music and worship coordinators (pictured above) met in Elgin, Ill., in October to begin planning for the conference. NYC will take place July 17-22 in Fort Collins, Colo.; registration begins Jan. 5 at www.brethren.org.

• Applications are being accepted for next summer's **Youth Peace Travel Team**, a group of young adults age 19 to 22 who share Jesus' message of peace with children and youth at church camps and other venues. The team is sponsored by the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult Ministries and Brethren Volunteer Service, On Earth Peace, and the Outdoor Ministries Association. They receive food, lodging, and travel expenses for the summer, and a college tuition grant. Applications are due Jan. 19. Go to www.brethren.org/YouthPeaceTravelTeam or contact Becky Ullom at 800-323-8039 ext. 297.

Listed on these pages are articles, editorials, columns, and opinion letters that have appeared in MESSENGER during 2009. They are classified in five groups: authors, In Touch contributors, letters to the editor, congregations, and subjects. Numbers following the listings indicate month and page number, with 7/8 representing the combined July/August issue.

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Camps: the forgotten ministry

In the 1920s several visionaries in the Church of the Brethren knew that one way to develop leadership in the church was to create a set-apart place where young people could go, recreate, worship and learn more about God's world and God's Word. Those places were the birth of our Church of the Brethren youth camps, the oldest ones being Camp Harmony, Camp La Verne, Camp Bethel, and Camp Alexander Mack.

From that point many others have sprung up across the country and the total now stands at 29 Church of the Brethren camps. Our church camps have been the place where life-changing growth happened to many young men and women, eventually leading them into a life of ministry.

The Outdoor Ministries Association grew out of the desire and need for the camps to network, share resources, and have a recognized larger presence as a whole within the Church of the Brethren. At that time OMA had a liai-

son who was on the General Board and connected with OMA on a regular basis. OMA was strongly promoted and supported within the brotherhood.

Our camps were strong through 1940s, '50s, '60s and '70s but began seeing a decline in the '80s following the decline of the churches themselves. It was no longer good enough to just go to camp. Camp had to have more specialty activities and challenges to attract the youth. With the young people having to choose between band camp, sports camp, and church camp it seemed that our camps became less important. Cultural changes and family lifestyle changes made it necessary for the camps to invent new ways to draw campers, yet they did and continued to hold strong. There have also been other programs within the church that have grown and given youth new opportunities to serve and learn leadership skills, programs such as the junior high and youth workcamps.

In the mid-'90s a group of camp directors went to a General Board meeting in New Windsor as representatives of all the camps. They asked how

 **Pontius' Puddle**



**WITH
GLAD AND
GENEROUS
HEARTS**

2010 National Workcamps

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people.

Acts 2:44-47a



Rebekah Houff



Meghan Horne



Jeanne Davian

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4. Brooklyn, New York - June 23-27
5. Indianapolis, Indiana - June 23-27
6. Ashland, Ohio - June 28-July 2
7. Roanoke, Virginia - July 28-Aug 1
8. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania - Aug 2-6
9. Richmond, Virginia - Aug 3-7

BRETHREN REVIVAL FELLOWSHIP SENIOR HIGH (9th-12th grade)

10. Dominican Republic - June 20-27
11. Reynosa, Mexico - July 31-Aug 7

INTERGENERATIONAL (ages 11-99)

12. New Windsor, Maryland - June 14-19

REGISTRATION BEGINS JANUARY 25, 2010 AT 7 P.M. CENTRAL TIME
www.brethren.org/workcamps 1-800-323-8039 ext. 286 cobworkcamps@brethren.org

 Church of the Brethren

many of the members present had a life-changing experience at camp, and every one of the board members raised their hands. Not long after that meeting the OMA/General Board liaison position was eliminated, disconnecting the larger church from the camps. The OMA still has a presence at Annual Conference, but the connection to the church as a whole has been demeaned and diminished.

I ask you to look at where the Church of the Brethren is headed when we no longer have the strong youth programs that grow leadership for the church. Many who read this and are in the ministry made that choice because of an experience you had at camp or through a youth-oriented activity. Many who read this and are not in the ministry may have come to a better understanding of God through your camp experience. The brotherhood needs to take a serious look at where the next generation of church leaders will come from. The church also needs to look at how to better serve the communities in which we live. How do we grow the church? We grow the youth and children!

Our camps are on holy ground. They each have their own sacred place or "thin place" where those who come feel truly close to God. The camps are sanctuaries where there is unconditional love, and no one is left behind. In today's world the average child spends only 25 minutes a week outside, and that is seldom in a natural setting. We as Brethren need to work hard to make

it a priority to reach these children and get them out into creation. No one can respect, appreciate, and care for a creation they don't understand, know nothing about, and are afraid of. No one can believe in and trust a God that they have not been able to learn about or experience in a truly personal way. Those things can and do happen at camp on a regular basis.



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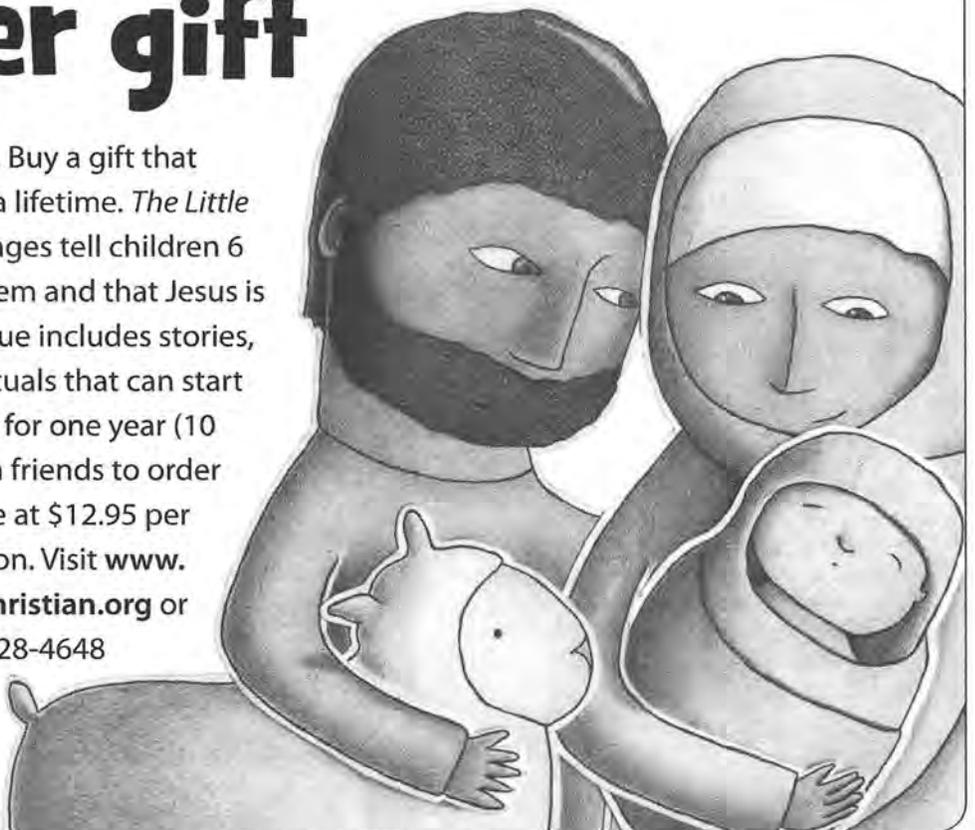
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CLASSIFIED ADS

Celebrating a Past / Envisioning a Future—a 135-page book on the 300th anniversary celebration (2008) in Schwarzenau, Germany, is available. Included are the plenary address by Marcus Meier entitled "Brethren: A Church between Anabaptism and Pietism," sermons by James Beckwith and Fredric Miller, and greetings by German dignitaries plus a pictorial review (87 photographs). Order from Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 10 South Broad Street, Lititz, PA 17543. \$16.00 plus \$3.00 p&h. Pennsylvania residents add six percent sales tax.

COORDINATOR OF ONLINE GIFT INVITATION for Church of the Brethren denominational office located in Elgin, Illinois. A partial list of responsibilities includes using Convio to promote and raise online gifts; develop a comprehensive plan for online giving; report on and analyze eCRM activities; copywriting and page design; e-mail campaigns and online giving activities; assist the Stewardship and Development department field staff; serve other Church of the Brethren departments with eCRM as needed. Qualifications include familiarity with web-based communications (Convio and HTML preferred), commitment to Church of the Brethren goals and objectives, membership in a Church of the Brethren (preferred); bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience. Contact: Office of Human Resources, 1-800-323-8039, ext 258, or e-mail kkrog@brethren.org.

Faculty Position in Brethren Studies
Bethany Theological Seminary invites applications for a three-year renewable part-time faculty position in Brethren Studies, beginning Fall 2010. Rank: open. PhD preferred; ABD considered. The appointee will be expected to teach 2 graduate-level courses per year (at least one as an online offering), and offer one Academy-level course biennially. Other duties will include: student advising and the supervision of MA theses in the area of Brethren Studies as needed. The area of expertise and research may come from a variety of fields, such as: Historical Studies, Theological Studies, Brethren Heritage, or Sociology and Religion. Commitment to the values and theological emphases within the Church of the Brethren is essential. We encourage applications from women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Application deadline: December 1, 2009.

Send a letter of application, CV, and names and contact information for three references to: Brethren Studies Search; Attn: Dean's Office; Bethany Theological Seminary; 615 National Road West; Richmond, IN 47374 or deansoffice@bethanyseminary.edu.

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.

I have watched through the years as the chasm between the camps and the General Board and the brotherhood as a whole grew wider and wider. When the camps are gone for lack of support and those sacred places are but a distant memory, we will look back with saddened hindsight and say we did not know what we had in those institutions. The "Four Horsemen" will weep, for their vision has been lost.

The camp directors who have dedicated their lives to the camps will see their visions die and along with it, the Church of the Brethren.

Next to our Sunday schools and sanctuaries, our camps are the best ministry tool out there to teach, to love, and to grow our children and our faith. Don't let the camps be a lost and forgotten ministry.

Karen Rowland
Milford, Ind.

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Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, IN

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I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
—1 Corinthians 3:6

Keynote Leadership



Jim Henderson is a pastor, musician and author of *Evangelism Without Additives* and *Jim and Casper Go to Church*.



Rose Swetman is a church planter and missional pastor who co-pastors Vineyard Community Church in Washington.

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Sponsored by the Church of the Brethren New Church Development Advisory Committee and Congregational Life Ministries in partnership with Bethany Theological Seminary and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership



A place for peace messages

I am most thankful for there being a peace church. I am thankful that I am a member of the Church of the Brethren—one of the three historic peace churches. I am thankful for the work that On Earth Peace and the brotherhood are doing for the work of peace. I imagine each of us would like to make our statements of peace and wish the whole world could see it.

There is now a website for this. Reba Herder, an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, has founded such a site. You can put your statement on the Web for all the world to see (at www.everylight.org). Can you imagine hundreds of peace messages going out from one place throughout the world literally?

Dorothea Fry Mason
North Manchester, Ind.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

What do you think is the biggest challenge for the Church of the Brethren in the next decade? Send your answer, in 50 words or less, to messenger@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Selected responses will be printed in a future issue.



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

New Members

Conewago, Hershey, Pa.: Kim Coble, Brittany Cooper, Kit Crawford, Marilyn Rice
Dixon, Ill.: Richard Person, Joyce Person, Kevin Coats, Kathy Coats
Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio: Griffin Moore, Jared Moore
Florin, Mount Joy, Pa.: Mary Lindner, Donna Greiner
Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.: James Sisler, Robert Kite, Lynn Kite
Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: James Ellinger, Susan Ellinger
Lansing, Mich.: Cathy Hargrove
Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind.: Richard Gripe, Bryan Hunter
Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Lenard Embiscuso, Kelly Embiscuso
Monte Vista, Callaway, Va.: Christa Craighead, Isaiah Craighead
Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Dinah Eisenberg
South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa: David Whitten, Judith Whitten
Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.: Jason Kreighbaum, Jennifer Kreighbaum, Joan Scheetz
Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.: Heather Gregory, June Blow
Trinity, Sidney, Ohio: Bill Anthony, Corey Thompson,

Michael Jones, Kyle Jones, McKenzie Jones

Anniversaries

Bollinger, Jacob and Miriam, Lancaster, Pa., 60
Crumbach, Paul and Bonnie, Caledonia, Mich., 50
Fagan, William and Lorraine, Huntingdon, Pa., 50
Faus, Henry and Doris, Manheim, Pa., 50
Forney, Lowell and Marlene, Lititz, Pa., 55
Garver, Ken and Beth, North Lima, Ohio, 65
Groff, Harold and Miriam, Stevens, Pa., 50
Hansell, Allen and Lois, Mountville, Pa., 50
Kover, Virgil and Floy, Manheim, Pa., 60
Oberholtzer, Chester and Martha, Lititz, Pa., 55
Ritchey, Herman and Beverly, Martinsburg, Pa., 50
Watkins, Lawrence and Ruth, New Paris, Ind. 70
Wenger, Calvin and Shirley, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Deaths

Allen, Mary, 81, Lancaster, Pa., July 24
Ambrose, Evelyn, 95, Huntingdon, Pa., Jan. 16, 2009
Armstrong, Arlene, 75, Lancaster, Pa., June 1
Barga, Shirley, 61, Sidney, Ohio, July 28
Barr, Robert M., 87, Pottstown, Pa., Sept. 11
Bhagat, Tsun-Hsien, 81, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 10
Blevins, Monte Lon, 76, Palmyra, Va., Sept. 3
Bollinger, Abram M., 91, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 5
Brandt, Robert, 80, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 8
Brumbaugh, Russell, 89,

Huntingdon, Pa. June 24
Burgner, Betty, 91, Troy, Ohio, Sept. 6
Chillas, Gary, 57, Lancaster, Pa., June 10
Dick, Vela Jane, 93, Lancaster, Pa., May 13
Ebey, Robert D., 94, North Manchester, Ind., Sept. 27
Garner, Sterling, 99, Westminster, Md., Sept. 28
Gripe, Richard, 71, Syracuse, Ind., Sept. 18
Grossnickle, C. Basil, 93, Boonsboro, Md., Sept. 19
Gruebmeier, Edward, 88, Sidney, Ohio, Oct. 17
Hartman, Alan, 50, East Petersburg, Pa., Oct. 22
Hess, Martha, 84, Robesonia, Pa., July 22
Hileman, Kenneth, 86, Huntingdon, Pa., July 29
Hillyard, Hazel R., 103, Broadway, Va., Oct. 8
Hiteshew, Luana M., 77, Windber, Pa., Oct. 9
Hodges, Wilbur R., 96, Callaway, Va., Aug. 25
Hollinger, Roy, 87, East Petersburg, Pa., Oct. 4
Hosler, Marlin, 85, Manheim, Pa., Oct. 1
Hylton, Gilbert Walker, 81, Christiansburg, Va., Sept. 16
Johnson, Lucy, 80, Blue Ridge, Va., Sept. 23
Johnson, Robert, 65, Wooster, Ohio, Sept. 8
Kinder, Lynda, 53, Sidney, Ohio, May 18
King, Richard, 87, Palmyra, Pa., Oct. 7
Kurtz, Ethel I., 88, Lititz, Pa., July 21
Lam, Lertie L., 83, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 15
Long, Joseph M., 80, Harrisburg, Pa., Oct. 14
Martin, Paul, 66, Richland, Pa., Aug. 11
Maurer, Eugene, 85,

Westmont, Ill., Oct. 17
Miller, Laura A., 90, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 8
Perkosky, Edna Pearl, 86, Windber, Pa., Oct. 9
Reiff, Vada Musser, 98, Plymouth, Ind., Sept. 20
Rolston, Harriet S., 92, Sheldon, Iowa, Sept. 20
Simmons, Melvin R., 83, Glen Burnie, Md., Sept. 1
Tomasco, Esther, 86, Lancaster, Pa., April 6
Weber, Mary, 87, Harleysville, Pa., Oct. 3
Welborn, Carolyn, 61, Troy, Ohio, Oct. 5
Wilson, F. Warren, 83, Brookville, Ohio, Oct. 8
Zemencik, Norma, 80, Uniontown, Pa., Oct. 3

Licensings

Hunn, Von Dean, W. Plains Dist. (Garden City, Kan.), Sept. 20
Prager, Thomas, Mich. Dist. (Beaverton, Mich.), Aug. 30
Rosell, Benny T., W. Plains Dist. (Lone Star, Lawrence, Kan.), Oct. 4
Szabo, Kimberly, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Green Tree, Oaks, Pa.), Sept. 27

Ordinations

Berkebile, James A., W. Pa. Dist. (Center Hill, Kittanning, Pa.), Aug. 23
Eby, Christian Earl, S. Pa. Dist. (Trinity, Waynesboro, Pa.), Oct. 4
Firestone, Judith A., W. Pa. Dist. (County Line, Champion, Pa.), Sept. 20
Pena, Joel, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Alpha & Omega, Lancaster, Pa.), Sept. 27
Singh, Christina, S/C Ind. Dist. (Richmond, Ind.), Sept. 20

Placements

Heinlen, Roy E., Jr., from pastor, Ninevah, Hardy, Va., to pastor, Vinton, Va., Oct. 1
Lovett, Diana, from interim to pastor, English River, South English, Iowa, Sept. 28
Malone, Sarah Quinter, pastor, Washington City, Washington, D.C., July 1
Ogden, Stanley P., from interim to pastor, Bethel, Arrington, Va., Oct. 1
Powell, Lewis E., from team interim to team pastor, Jennersville, West Grove, Pa., June 7
Raker, Robert C., pastor, Trinity, Blountville, Tenn., Sept. 15
Rice, Kent, associate pastor for special ministries, Hempfield, Manheim, Pa., Sept. 28
Simmons, Randall V., pastor, Mount Vernon, Waynesboro, Va., July 1
Singh, Christina, pastor, Panora, Iowa, Sept. 1
Smith, Michael E., from interim to pastor, North Winona, Warsaw, Ind., June 14
Sonafrank, Harold E., from interim to pastor, Leakes Chapel, Stanley, Va., June 1
Statler, Charles B., from interim to pastor, Shade Creek, Ridge, Hooversville, Pa., Aug. 2
Tosten, Timothy E., director of youth ministries, Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa., Aug. 30
Wantz, Douglas, pastor, Pipe Creek, Union Bridge, Md., Sept. 1

Bubbling over

Somewhere in Seattle, the creative if perhaps slightly warped minds at Jones Soda Co. are likely hatching an idea for their newest soda flavor right this minute.

While the company makes many “normal”-flavored beverages—such as cherry, cream soda, and root beer—it became famous for its more offbeat offerings, particularly around Thanksgiving and Christmas. Have you ever had a turkey & gravy soda? Perhaps some fizzy green bean casserole or 12 ounces of bubbly liquid fruitcake?



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

The advertising is decidedly whimsical. I don't know if anyone actually enjoyed the unusual flavors or if they just made good gag gifts (perhaps the latter, as Jones has gone with somewhat more traditional flavors the past few years, more along the lines of “candy cane”). There is no doubt, though, that Jones occupies a unique niche, and people take notice.

In an era when Brethren often seem to be more fizzling than fizzy, what unique flavors do we still possess? Do we have something that catches the world's eye, or soul, however peculiar it may be?

Ask staff or others who travel and work in ecumenical circles, and they'll tell you yes. Person after person says the

authority than the moral force of their cause deserve much of the credit for shutting down one of Philadelphia's worst sources of handguns used in crimes.” Another article praised the big impact of Heeding God's Call's seemingly small witness.

It's a unique voice that certainly gained some attention, and respect, in that city. Peace vigils and protests and marches aren't for everyone, but each of us can do our part to bring about God's peace on earth, and the larger work of Jesus Christ.

We should ask ourselves, in our context, what Mennonite author Myron Augsburger asked his church in *Mennonite Weekly Review*: “What would be missing in the Christian church if the Mennonites didn't exist?” He lamented the congregations and groups who were dropping “Mennonite” from their name for a variety of reasons and said, “Well, we might drop it, unless we have the guts to live as a believers church again, a people known to be disciples of Christ, who walk with him, who share his transforming grace.”

No name is perfect, he admits, but he says the one they have has come to represent a distinct heritage and a Christ-like way of life and action. One would hope the same could be said of ours.

As Bethany Theological Seminary president Ruthann Knechel Johansen addressed the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board recently, she used a familiar but compelling Advent phrase. Noting the many changes facing the church,

IN AN ERA WHEN BROTHERS OFTEN SEEM TO BE MORE FIZZLING THAN FIZZY, WHAT UNIQUE FLAVORS DO WE STILL POSSESS? DO WE HAVE SOMETHING THAT CATCHES THE WORLD'S EYE, OR SOUL, HOWEVER PECULIAR IT MAY BE?

Historic Peace Church voice is needed now more than ever.

That played out in concrete form this year in Philadelphia, where the Historic Peace Churches (Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers) sponsored the “Heeding God's Call” conference in January. The schedule included a public peace witness at Colosimo's Gun Center, a notorious local firearms dealer. Some members of the group continued to do witness events through the year (www.heedinggodscall.org), including a Good Friday event that media said drew 250 people.

The store closed in September, following multiple federal charges of illegal gun sales, fines, and the government's stated intent to revoke Colosimo's federal firearms license. Philadelphia's largest newspaper, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, wrote this in its Sept. 26 editorial after the charges and closure were announced:

“Dozens of faith-based activists who had no more

she asked: “What is God's annunciation to us today?”

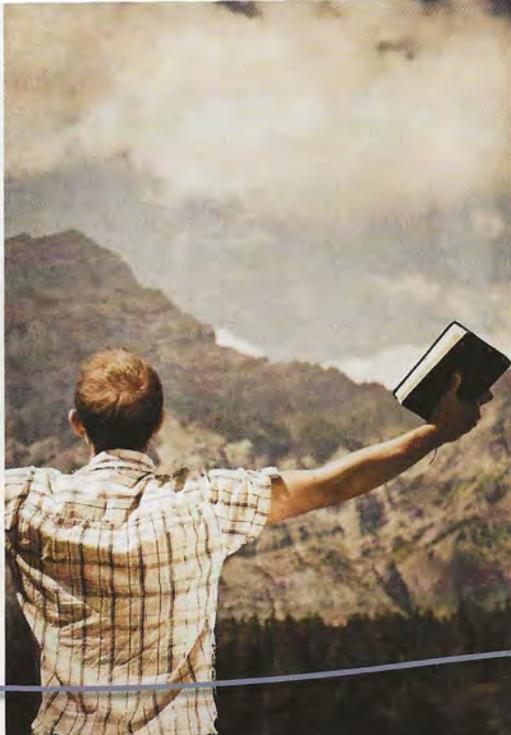
It refers to the episode recorded in the Gospels when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and revealed that she would bear the Son of God into the world. The moment has been imagined in numerous pieces of art, and the story is read in virtually every church this time of year.

Gabriel says it is a message of joy and blessedness; Mary, understandably, isn't so sure at first. But Gabriel reassures her, “Do not be afraid,” and Mary soon responds, “Let it be with me according to your word.” A few verses later she sings the praise of this daunting new blessing.

God's call always draws on the unique gifts we have been given, whether we see them within us or not. This Advent season, may we be quiet enough to hear what word God speaks to us, and bold enough to let it bubble up within us when it comes.—Ed.

COMING IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY (combined winter issue): Abundance, faith in China, worship technology, glimpses of history, a new Bible study series on wisdom, and more.

... whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.
1 Peter 4:11



Ministry Summer Service

Ministry Summer Service is a leadership development program for college students in the Church of the Brethren who spend 10 weeks of the summer working in the church (local congregation, district office, camp, or national program).

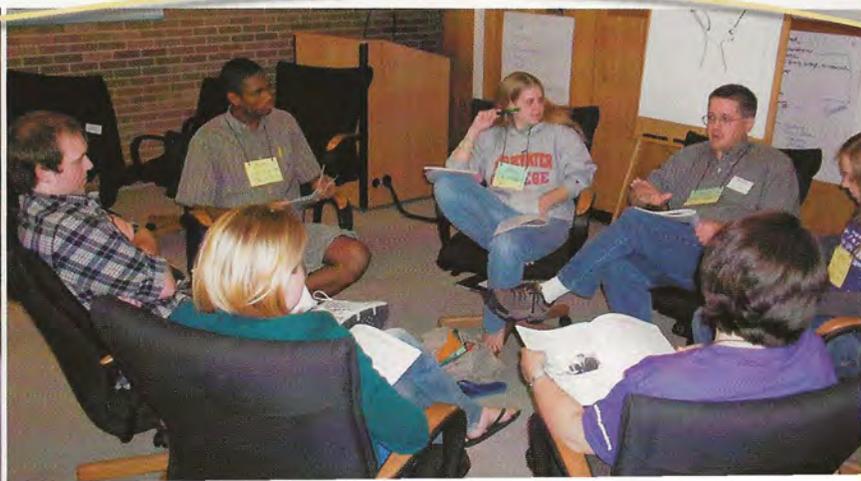
Congregations may ask, "Why should we take on a summer intern?" Young adults may ask, "Why should we work for the church for a whole summer?" The answer has to do with God's call. The Bible is a record of God calling people to challenging tasks. Ministry Summer Service is not exception. God is calling congregations to reach out in the ministry of teaching and receiving. God is calling young adults to explore the possibility of church work as their vocation.



Church of the Brethren

Intern and mentor applications are due Feb. 1, 2010.

For applications, more information, or the chance to financially support MSS, visit www.brethren.org/mss or call 800-323-8039, x 297.





We thank God for all the blessings of this past year. We thank each of you for your 2009 gifts, volunteer hours, and prayers for the mission and ministries of the Church of the Brethren, working together as “doers of the word, and not merely hearers...” (James 1:22a).

hearers and
doers
of the **WORD**



Church of the Brethren