



Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Sudan

A pivotal moment



Suggested offering date: March 6, 2011

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—2 Corinthians 9:7, the Message version.

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—2 Corintios 9:7, la versión del Mensaje

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Church of the Brethren

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

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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Michael Wagner

ON THE COVER

The faces of these two students at an Africa Inland Church-Sudan school reflect the anxiety and hope, doubt and joy that many in their country currently feel over what may lie ahead for their homeland. The outcome of the January 9 Referendum, which could divide the country into two parts, may mean liberation and self-determination for many, but will likely also bring a sense of unease as both sides adjust to an uncertain future. Michael Wagner, Church of the Brethren staff in Sudan, who took this photo, provides an update on page 8.

8 Sudan's pivotal moment

“As an historic peace church, we Brethren need to hold our Sudanese brothers and sisters in our thoughts and prayers at this momentous time in Sudan’s history,” says Michael Wagner, Church of the Brethren mission staff member in southern Sudan, and author of this issue’s cover story. Sudan’s January 9 Referendum brought crucial issues in that country into sharp focus. A detailed timeline of the Church of the Brethren’s involvement in Sudan since 1980 accompanies Wagner’s article.

14 Do you love me?

When Middle Pennsylvania District youth coordinator Karen Duhai traveled to Haiti for a workcamp last June, she expected she would be helping those still in need following that country’s devastating earthquake. What she didn’t expect was to be transformed, herself. “Those little children taught me more about love and hospitality in a week than I had learned in 25 years. We came in as strangers, and they guided us. They did not know us. They could have shut their doors to us. Instead, they walked with us wherever we needed to go. They loved us.”

18 The third way to faithfulness

Is there a way to be true to our own convictions without being overbearing? Does showing tolerance for others’ faith perspectives necessarily weaken our own stance? Allen Hansell, former district executive of the Atlantic Northeast District, claims there is a way of being faithful that neither waters down our own beliefs nor demands that others conform to our way of viewing things. “Let us be faithful to Jesus,” he says. “God will decide who has the truth and who doesn’t.”

DEPARTMENTS

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At my church there's a direct pipeline between the toddler room and an upstairs office. Apparently the heating duct works like two tin cans and a string, only better. I still remember the Sunday morning I learned this.

Fortunately, the conversation that was overheard was only sleep-deprived chit-chat at the end of an all-night junior high lock-in. Thank goodness. What if the overheard words had been less benign? It's not hard to imagine the possibilities.

Or what if the other end of the heating duct was the internet? It happens. At the end of a contentious school hearing a few years ago, I was startled when one man announced—meaning to be helpful, it seemed—that he had recorded the meeting and would be posting it online right away. Did any of the overheated parents regret what they had said?



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Let's imagine something else: What if the conversation that was overheard was an impassioned debate within a band of people who are followers of Jesus? What if this particular group was known as a people who modeled a life of peace-making and wished to show that another way of living was possible (even when others dismissed the peacemakers as naïve)?

And what if this group of brothers and sisters (as they might be known, because of the regard they hold for each other) believed that the manner of their living—including the manner of their disagreeing—was as important as who won? What if they saw the disagreement less as a referendum to win and

more as a critical opportunity to practice being the body of Christ? What if this people's disavowal of secret societies caused them to act as if every debate was being overheard by the outside world? What if their private conversations and e-mails and blog posts were worded as carefully as if the objects of their remarks were sitting at the same table?

What if this people spoke as if Jesus himself was sitting at the table? What if they looked around and saw that he was already there, listening intently?

What outrageously idealistic witness might this hopeful, compassionate people make?

Wendy McFadden

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Peoria First Church joins Mount Zion Methodists on mission trip

For nearly 30 years, the First Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ill., has been joining Peoria's Mount Zion United Methodist Church for a trip to eastern Kentucky to deliver clothing, household items, and tools to Henderson Settlement and Red Bird Mission. On Nov. 18, a dozen First Church members helped deliver items on the 650 mile trip to the eastern Appalachian Mountains.

The Peoria Church specializes in clothing and other goods for babies and young children. During the year, fundraising events are held so that the missions team can purchase disposable diapers and to go to garage sales to purchase baby clothes, car seats, cribs, and toys. In November, the church sent one truck and trailer and a van filled with items just for babies to Henderson Settlement. Members of the church



Members of the First Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ill., unload donated furniture at the Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Ky.

also fill a bassinet placed in the narthex with new baby clothes and other needed items.

"We collect for this all year. We're so captivated by this ministry," said First Church pastor Dana McNeil. "In addition to collecting items for babies and young children, we also hold dinners throughout the year to raise money for people

who might not be able to afford to go on this trip. We want anyone who has an interest in coming to be able to join us. We think it's important for people to see the need in eastern Kentucky where there are some of the poorest counties in the United States. Since began going there, things have improved a lot. But you still see a lot of good, proud folks who don't want a hand-out, but who need help."

The missions expressed their gratitude for the clothing and for items that can be distributed through Opportunity Stores to help support the mission. They also give clothing and furniture to people who have been burned out of their homes. Burn-outs are not uncommon where wood and coal stoves still provide much of the heat for manufactured homes and mountain cottages. The missions provide many of the much-needed resources for the people of eastern Kentucky.

"It's hard to reach hungry people, so you start by helping to meet their physical needs and go from there," McNeil remarked.

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.



YOU SAID IT

"What if we spent our energies never on 'biting and devouring' (Galatians 5:15) each other, and always on demonstrating positive outlooks and tender care for all?"

—Sonja Griffith, executive minister, Western Plains District, from her December "I was just thinking..." newsletter column.

BY THE NUMBERS

200,000

Dollar amount of a grant Bethany Theological Seminary received from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations for financial support of its Presidential Forum. The grant will be used to establish an endowment to create perpetual funding for the event.

Northeast The Brethren Home Community (New Oxford, Pa.) held a Celebration of Lights on Dec. 5... Southern Pennsylvania District is selling a historical narrative DVD of the district titled Rivers of Faith. Associate district executive Georgia Markey, district historian Elmer Gleim, and former district executive Warren Eshbach and his wife, Teresa, contributed to the project.

Southeast Roundtable, the regional youth conference for the Church of the Brethren's southeastern districts, will take place on March 18-20. New Community Project director David Radcliff will be the guest speaker, and entertainment will be provided by the Christian rock band Adonia. The weekend will include workshops, small groups, and worships. The theme, "I Believe I Can Fly," was inspired by 1 Timothy 4:12. More information is available at <http://bridgewater.edu/orgs/iyf>.

Midwest ROBOT (the Radically Obedient Brethren Outreach Team) was launched recently by the Manchester College campus ministry office to bring teams of students to local churches to lead Sunday morning worship services. ... The Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren is hosting a children's disaster services workshop March 18-19. The workshop begins at 5 p.m. Friday and goes until 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Ozarks/Plains Brethren in the Western Plains District helped make the Projects Unlimited auction a success with a variety of donated items. A total of \$5,690 was raised for local and global organizations, including Camp Mount Hermon, Trees for Life, Heifer International, disaster relief, the Western Plains District, and Lybrook missions. ... A chapel is being constructed at Camp Pine Lake in Eldora, Iowa.

West On Oct. 31, Earth Ministry welcomed the Olympic View (Wash.) Church of the Brethren as a new "greening congregation." In the November general assembly, the church adopted a vision statement of what Olympic View is doing to keep and maintain its green status, which reads: "As a greening congregation, we seek to express our love for God by showing reverence for the Earth and all of its creatures." Earth Ministry is a nonprofit organization committed to engaging the Christian community in environmental stewardship.

“Ordinary radical” coming to McPherson

Speakers for McPherson College’s 2010-2011 lecture series have always followed their passions and innovative ideas – wherever they lead. Upcoming speaker Shane Claiborne, who addressed the Church of the Brethren’s 2010 National Youth Conference in Fort Collins, Colo., fits this description perfectly.

“My personal feeling is that this is one of the most engaging groups of lecturers that we have brought to campus in a long time,” said Steven Gustafson, professor of music at the campus, and coordinator of the lecture series.

Claiborne, a self-described “ordinary radical” who established a monastic group in Philadelphia called the Potter Street Community, is the author or co-author of

four books, including *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*. In them, Claiborne advocates for a Christianity that helps vulnerable people and society instead of condemning – to truly love unconditionally. Claiborne also explained his philosophy in a column he wrote for *Esquire* magazine in 2009 titled “What if Jesus Meant All that Stuff?” He is featured in the documentary *The Ordinary Radicals* and



Lester Kesselring dedicating the original pulpit from the first Church of the Brethren in Florida. He tracked down the building where the church was located, shown below.



Tracking down Florida’s first Brethren church

[In celebration and in honor of the 125th anniversary of the Atlantic Southeast District, Lester and Barbara Kesselring of the Sebring (Fla.) Church of the Brethren set out to find the site of the first Church of the Brethren in Florida, founded in 1884 by J.H. Moore (an editor in the late 19th century of Brethren’s Messenger, a forerunner of today’s MESSENGER). Their journey involved some unexpected—but ultimately happy—twists and turns, as they recount here. —Ed.]

According to history books, Florida’s first Church of the Brethren is located on the west side of Lake Keuka in the village of Keuka in Putnam County, Fla., 65 miles south of Jacksonville. With visions of a built-up community, shopping centers, high-rises, and condominiums, we set out with hopes of finding someone who would at least be able to direct us to the site where the building may have once stood.

Our journey took us to the north side of the Ocala Forest and down a narrow, bumpy, and muddy road. Eventually, we saw street signs with references to Keuka. We turned right onto “Old Cemetery Road” and, after stopping to remove a large tree limb from our path, we arrived at the aged cemetery. After getting past a barbed-wire fence, we located the grave of John Nelson Overhultz, a school teacher and the last presiding elder of the Keuka Church. We learned that the church had dissolved in 1928 and that the building had been sold.

From there, we drove about a mile along the west side of the lake toward Keuka, a village of about 20 homes scattered along unpaved streets. As we drove beside the lake, we spotted a white church building hidden among the brush. We stopped at a home

across the street from the church and explained to the owner that we were members of the denomination that might have built the church. “Oh yes,” she remarked, “they were the Dunkers.” She then told us that she owns the church building—which had at one time been used as a dance studio but was now used for storage—and graciously gave us a tour. Inside, we saw that the original pulpit was still there. It was getting dark, so we asked if we could return in the morning to take pictures. “Sure,” she said, “I won’t be here, but enjoy.”

We returned the next morning, but regretted that we had not asked the woman if any of the little homes may have been the parsonage.

After our photo session, we walked down the street—a sandy path, really—and encountered Hilda Gelhans, who looked to be a long-time resident, standing in front of a house. We told her what we were about and asked if she knew if one of the homes might have been the old church’s parsonage. “Oh, it’s mine,” she said. “Reverend Moore built this house. Would you like to come in?” After touring the former parsonage, we found a sandy path from the church to the marshy lakefront. The path is still referred to by both the women we met as the “baptismal path.”

Since that exciting historical journey and visit, the owner of the church building donated the pulpit to the Atlantic Southeast District, where it is currently housed at the district office in Sebring.

[Note: This article was adapted from an article by Lester Kesselring that appeared in the Atlantic Southeast District newsletter, *The Newsbearer*.]

the DVD series *Another World is Possible*. He also has been featured on *Fox News*, *CNN*, *National Public Radio*, and in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Claiborne spent 10 weeks in Calcutta, India, with Mother Teresa, and three weeks in Baghdad with the Iraq Peace Team during the first stages of the recent Iraq war, witnessing the bombing, visiting hospitals, and attending worship services. He also spent a year serving in the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, Ill.

A number of McPherson College students heard Claiborne speak at NYC last summer. Gustafson said they were impressed with his message of making a difference. Claiborne has values similar to McPherson College, Gustafson said, and will even go so far to make a



Shane Claiborne

donation to activities that will offset the carbon emissions his travel to the college will generate.

Claiborne will speak at McPherson on Feb. 10 as part of the college's Religious Heritage Lecture series.



**SOMETHING'S
COOKING**


Brethren Press®

REMEMBERED

David G. Metzler, 80, of Bridgewater, Va., died at his home on Jan. 2, surrounded by family. David was an ordained Church of the Brethren minister and a professor at Bridgewater College from 1958-62 and from 1966-95. He taught at the University of Jos in Nigeria from 1981-83. David earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion from McPherson College, a master's degree from Bethany Theological Seminary, a master's degree in New Testament from Harvard Divinity School, and a PhD in theology from Boston University. David served as an interim pastor in numerous Brethren congregations throughout the Shenandoah Valley.

Metzler was known as a kind and gentle man, and his deep convictions about the importance of peacemaking led him to be active in reconciliation work both locally and in the wider world. His wide-ranging interests included a love of animals. He milked the family cow for many years, kept bees, and planted an orchard. He was also a good athlete; in 1952 he ran a 1:55.8 in the 880-yard run at the Kansas Relays, setting a McPherson College record that stood for many years.

Earl W. "Nicky" Hammer, aged 79, husband of 55 years, of Peggy O'Baugh Hammer, died on Thursday, Dec. 16, in Harrisonburg. Earl was licensed to the ministry in June of 1956 and was ordained on May 26, 1963. Brother Earl, as he was called, served 33 years in full time ministry. He served Topoco and Fairview churches in Floyd County, Va., Briery Branch near Dayton, Va., Charlottesville and Free Union, and retired from Blue Ridge Chapel in Waynesboro in 1996. While in seminary, he served two summer pastorates, one in Durbin, W.Va., and Leakes Chapel in Stanley, Va. Also, for three years, while in college, he served four part-time churches in Highland County.

Hammer served twice on the Standing Committee of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. In addition, he served as chairperson of the Shenandoah District Board, chairperson of the District Ministry Commission, and as a member of the nominating committee.

For many years he served as camp leader at Camp Bethel and at Brethren Woods.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **The John Kline Homestead Preservation Trust** closed on the homestead property with Park View Federal Credit Union on Dec. 30. They were able to raise sufficient funds to pay for the house and closing costs, and are awaiting the fulfillment of pledges and other gifts to pay the carrying costs to PVFCU. The Preservation Trust is grateful to individuals and congregations who contributed to the purchase of the homestead. The board of directors met in January to reorganize and create committees to maintain and develop the property. They are exploring the possibility of listing the homestead on the Virginia and National Historic Registries.

Five voices

The sparrows abruptly stopped their singing and began giving their low, nasally *jim-jim* alarm call. The Black-capped Chickadees were living up to their namesake as well—the more dees in the alarm sequence, the greater the threat.

I had been at my sit spot for over an hour, falling into the rhythm of the forest, when these alarm sequences aroused my curiosity. What were these birds alarmed at? Carnivore? Raptor? Human? Suddenly, the alarms went from being frantic to altogether silent, as if someone had pressed a “mute” button.



RANDALL WESTFALL

My sit spot is a place in nature that has become sacred to me. It is where I learn from the trees and plants, read the stories of the animals that have left their tracks and sign. It is where I can worship and reflect by connecting to creation and the Creator. And, more recently, a place where I can listen to the language of the birds. They are the ones who let me know what is going on in the woods. After all, they aren't just chattering, they have something to say.

To understand bird language, you do not need to know every song and call from every species, you just need to

to expand my awareness not only in the forest, but when I am at home, work, or church. This isn't about being fluent in any particular language, but about noticing the commonalities.

Everywhere I go now, I am increasingly aware of those five human voices. I observe this in churches and camp communities I visit. I see and hear the songs of celebration and thanksgiving. I am aware of the companion calls of love between teenagers, young adults, and newlyweds. I have witnessed children begging (and sometimes annoying) their parents. I have seen and, sadly, been a part of what can only be described as territorial aggression as it relates to conflict in the church. I notice the alarm calls of people in pain and fear who are screaming out for help. But I also notice the more desperate alarms in which there is only silence.

I've speculated a lot recently about how I display (or hide) my five voices. I truly believe that the baseline voice for us, much like our winged kin, is to be singing in celebration and thanksgiving. Yet I observe that we spend more time out of baseline, which is not what our Creator intended for us. Which of the five voices is more predominant in the Church of the Brethren?

This really is about a heightened sense of awareness. How aware are we of our family, friends, neighbors, and enemies? With technological gadgets demanding that our focus be small (on screens), we often miss the bigger pic-

MY AVIAN FRIENDS HAVE TAUGHT ME NOT ONLY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR LANGUAGE BUT ALSO TO UNDERSTAND THAT, AS HUMANS, WE HAVE FIVE VOICES AS WELL.

understand the connection between songs and alarms. There are basically five “voices.” The first two are known as baseline voices. The most common of these are songs, primarily done in thanksgiving. The second is often what we hear when birds are not singing; this is their call, usually made between companions.

Next, there are two circumstantial voices that are seasonal. One indicates territorial aggression between males during courting and breeding season. The other is the begging of juveniles. Lastly, you have the alarm call, which is often a more pronounced, rapid version of their call. Sometimes, however, the alarm can be an ominous silence in what had been an otherwise active forest.

My avian friends have taught me not only to better understand their language but also to understand that, as humans, we have five voices as well. They have taught me

ture around us. I believe God is pushing our edges to awaken all that lies dormant within us. This isn't some new-age thing; it is quite ancient (see Job 12:7-9), and for our ancestors, this knowledge was in their bones. This isn't something we have to learn; it is already within us. We've just lost faith in this way of believing and being because we think that there are no longer lessons to be learned.

What were those birds alarmed at? Based on the alarm sequence—and the hush that immediately followed—I suspect a Cooper's Hawk was hunting in the forest understorey. To be honest though, I don't know. And I am comfortable with that. Such mystery only draws me deeper. **W**

Randall Westfall is an outdoor educator, tracker, songwriter, storyteller, and licensed minister living in Lena, Ill. He attends Lanark (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.

QUOTE WORTHY

“More than railing against others, the prophet rallies others for God’s loving purposes and actions.”

—Bethany Theological Seminary professor Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm, writing in Bethany’s *Wonder & Word* magazine about prophetic preaching

“Christians concerned about poverty and the environment aren’t used to sitting at the popular table in the cultural cafeteria.”

—Valerie Weaver-Zercher, in the December 2010 online version of *Sojourners* magazine. Ms. Weaver-Zercher is a contributing editor to *Sojourners* and editor of the 30th-anniversary edition of *Living More with Less* (Herald Press, 2010) and edits for the Gather ‘Round curriculum project.

“I love being around for the ‘a-ha’ moments, the moments when faith deepens and lives begin to change.”

—Becky Ullom, director of Youth/Young Adult Ministry, talking about her passion for youth work. She was quoted by McPherson (Kan.) College when receiving the school’s Young Alumni Award.

“Instead of using religion as an instrument to transform life for the better, we have used it to transform life for the worst.”

—the Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, general advisor to the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), discussing conflict and violence in Nigeria. (WCC News Service)

“From the standpoint of involvement, small churches are more effective in evangelism, in getting people involved. It’s more difficult for a large church to be more specific, to give the kind of personal attention that a small church can give.”

—Royal Speidel, retired United Methodist pastor, discussing his book *Evangelism in the Small Membership Church*. He was quoted in The *United Methodist Reporter*.

CULTUREVIEW

The debate over plans to build an **Islamic community center near Ground Zero** in New York was the top religion story of 2010, according to a survey of religion journalists. The imam piloting the project, Feisal Abdul Rauf, was voted the Religion Newswriters Association’s top newsmaker of 2010, besting Pope Benedict XVI, Sarah Palin, and aid workers in earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

As part of the **National Council of Churches’ Circles of Names campaign**, more than 75 women and men gathered at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., Nov. 18 to honor the Rev. **Drema McAllister-Wilson** and other women who have made significant contributions to the

ecumenical movement and the lives of the individuals they encountered. McAllister-Wilson was cited for her work in supporting persons, families, and communities facing grief and loss.

Marvin Parvez, **Church World Service director for Pakistan/Afghanistan** and regional coordinator for Asia and the Pacific for CWS, an ACT Alliance member, says that the so-called war on terror is dictating the West’s decisions on humanitarian relief. CWS and ACT Alliance—one of the world’s largest humanitarian aid networks—are committed to the humanitarian principle of treating all human beings without discrimination.



JUST FOR FUN: WORD FIND

GOING TO THE MOUNTAINTOP In this month’s puzzle, find the 12 words below associated with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday is observed in January. Words can be forwards or backwards, horizontal, vertical, or diagonal.

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| R | W | H | I | E | R | E | E | I | T | S | C |
| E | A | K | T | L | H | L | A | G | A | R | H |
| M | A | R | C | H | R | O | N | M | T | E | I |
| O | A | B | A | P | T | I | S | T | N | T | C |
| G | M | T | O | J | H | V | G | U | A | S | A |
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**KING
ATLANTA
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CIVIL RIGHTS**

**MARCH
WASHINGTON
DREAM
BAPTIST**

**NOBEL
CHICAGO
MONTGOMERY
NONVIOLENCE**

SUDAN'S pivotal moment

by Michael Wagner

We Brethren need to hold our Sudanese brothers and sisters in our thoughts and prayers at this momentous time in Sudan's history.

Google "Sudan," and your results list is likely to be as extensive as the number of people who have been affected by that country's violent history. The lingering psychological effects of the two Sudanese civil wars—which devastated southern Sudan and resulted in the deaths of more than 2 million individuals, and forced millions more into refugee camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, not to mention the ongoing guerilla conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan—serve as ever-present

reminders of Sudan's brutal history. These recurrent conflicts, which have beset this country for 39 of the past 55 years, and have left southern Sudan as one of the most underdeveloped regions in the world, were brought to a conclusion on Jan. 9, 2005, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The CPA granted Southerners the right to vote on the issue of self-determination after an interim period of six years, a timeframe which the Government of National Unity was to

The Church of the Brethren walk with Sudan

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

This timeline traces 30 years of Church of the Brethren involvement with Sudan, based on the published record in MESSENGER and Newslines from 1980 to the present.

1980: Church of the Brethren work in Sudan starts with a partnership with the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) to develop a Primary Health Care Program in the Sudd region, making health care available to the Nuer and Dinka peoples. J. Roger and Carolyn Schrock begin the work, invited by the council because of the successful Lafiya program launched by Brethren in Nigeria. Groundwork for partnership in Sudan is laid in the 1960s, when Christian refugees from Sudan settle in Nigeria and invite Brethren to work in their homeland. By the late 1970s the Brethren have a formal invitation from the SCC.

At this time there is a lull in the civil war between the North and South of Sudan, a war that started in the mid-1950s. A 1972 peace agreement giving southern provinces self-government within the republic is deteriorating, especially after oil is discovered in the South.

1984: Brethren are in a new partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Sudan, placing Ken and Elsie Holderread with this indigenous church to train pastors, evangelists, and church leaders. By mid-year, five Brethren mission workers are in Sudan. But by December, because of political ten-

sions, only the Holderreads remain, along with Ruth M. Goehle, a doctor serving in the Primary Health Care Program under Brethren auspices. The political situation has been exacerbated by the introduction of Sharia law by the northern Muslim government. Rebel groups have come to be organized under auspices of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

1985: Violence between North and South and a coup that topples the government in the North forces a shift in Brethren program. Mervin and Gwen Brumbaugh Keeney in

March begin working with the Primary Health Care Program, and then shift to a new assignment assisting the SCC to administer medical care for refugee encampments. As of mid-year, the council holds major responsibility for 17 of 30 refugee camps in eastern Sudan.

1986: Ministry with the Presbyterian Church in Sudan continues as a Theological Education by Extension program in English, Arabic, and Nuer. The Holderreads administer the program, working out of the capital city Khartoum in the north. The program has expanded to provide a crisis



Michael Wagner

use to make unity an “attractive” option. The CPA also stipulated that campaigning in favor of separation would not be supported; however, this has largely been ignored in the South. Banners presenting the messages of “Unity Means War” and “Separation Equals Justice” are a recurrent theme

throughout Juba and larger towns in southern Sudan. Furthermore, illiteracy rates as high as 85 percent in this region necessitate the publishing of ballot materials using symbols to represent either secession or unity. The image of a handshake symbolizes unity, while a hand waving goodbye signifies

A youth choir of the Africa Inland Church-Sudan (AIC). The Church of the Brethren currently partners with the AIC to place Brethren mission worker Michael Wagner with the AIC in southern Sudan.

ministry seminar to help pastors deal with war and famine. Goehle begins as project coordinator for a health care facility for mothers and children in Darfur—the Maternal Child Health project. MESSENGER reports it is the first program of its kind to be undertaken by the SCC in Darfur. But war conditions in parts of the country force most of the five Brethren personnel assigned to Sudan to move to Khartoum. By the end of the year, SCC general secretary Clement Janda warns that the civil war is endangering millions of lives. The SPLA has sealed off the South from receiving food, and the northern government also is cutting off aid. “Both sides are using hunger as a weapon,” Janda tells Religion News Service. As of mid-year, the church’s Emergency Disaster

Fund (EDF) has sent \$20,000 to Sudan for seeds and tools.

1987: Budget cuts by the General Board reduce personnel in Sudan, and reduce financial support for the mission program there. In October, Sudan’s government orders several Christian aid agencies to leave because, it says, the worst effects of famine in the country are over. In November, the SCC reports that denial of basic human rights “has become common practice” in Sudan.

1988: The southern city of Malakal faces starvation after running out of food at the end of January. As of mid-year, no Brethren are working in Sudan because of fighting. Brethren staff Lester and Esther Boley begin to coordinate a Bible

translation project of the Presbyterian Church in Sudan and the United Bible Societies, working out of Kenya. They will spend more than a decade overseeing a team translating the Bible into the Sudanese language of Nuer. The EDF gives grants for disaster relief and internally displaced people in Sudan. By year’s end, the SCC has launched a peace campaign.

1989: Brethren staff are again appointed to the Presbyterian TEE program and Bible school: Jan and Roma Jo Thompson lead the program, working in Gereif, just outside Khartoum. The Church of the Brethren is one of five supporting agencies of the Presbyterian Church in Sudan, and has a similar relationship with the SCC. The Bible trans-

lation work based in Kenya progresses, with 13 Old Testament books translated into Nuer, and the books of Jonah and Amos published as “scripture portions.” Because of the sharp north-south separation, a New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) is created to serve the South, with the blessing of the SCC that continues in the North. This year’s Christmas Achievement Offering highlights the plight of the Nuer people from the area of Mayom—the ethnic group with whom Brethren personnel in Sudan first lived and ministered in 1980, now an entire population that has either fled its home area or has died in the war. Many people from Mayom are eking out an existence in a resettlement camp on the outskirts of Khartoum. **continued**



Michael Wagner

This group of boys are students at a school of the Africa Inland Church-Sudan (AIC) in Lohotuk, Eastern Equatoria State, southern Sudan.

separation. Significantly, the second illustration is the one found affixed to various structures throughout towns and villages in southern Sudan.

Sudanese government ministers have declared that if the South secedes, Southerners remaining in the North will not have access to the most basic of public services. The Sudan Armed Forces, in an effort to intimi-

date voters, began bombing campaigns recently near the North-South border region in western Bahr-al-Ghazal State, which forced thousands from their villages.

As tensions mount, many decisions pertinent to the peaceful implementation of the CPA remain outstanding. The National Congress Party (the ruling party in the North) and the Sudanese

People's Liberation Movement (the governing party in the South) have yet to reach a consensus on future citizenship arrangements, the division of natural resources (particularly oil), security, the division of Sudanese debt, and compliance with international accords—items that could easily see Sudan revert to its violent past.

The potential aftermath of the Jan. 9 Referendum vote notwithstanding, the South still faces monumental challenges. As a former Peace Corps volunteer in Burkina Faso, I had the opportunity to travel throughout the Sahel—the region of West Africa that ranks at the bottom of the United Nations Human

1990: Sudan is suffering a devastating famine, caused both by lack of rain and the effects of civil war. But the Sudanese government denies that millions face starvation, even as it commandeers aid shipments. Jan Thompson is seconded to the SCC Emergency Response Program and works at bringing in and distributing relief aid. The church's Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF) and EDF give a number of grants to aid displaced people in Sudan and refugees who have fled to other countries. Roger Schrock is invited by the NSCC to serve as its first executive secretary. Meanwhile, the northern government survives a number of coup attempts, and government killings and human rights abuses continue. The South is virtually controlled by the SPLA, except for "garrison" towns held by the northern army.

Carolyn Schrock (left) in Sudan.

1991: The North puts more restrictions on the ability of humanitarian groups to distribute food, and denies that starvation is occurring in Darfur and elsewhere. The EDF continues to make grants to Sudan in a kind of gamble that aid will get in, at a time when the northern government is swapping food for military armaments from Arab countries. Early in the year the US cuts off food aid to the Sudanese government. The Gulf crisis and then the US war with Iraq exacerbates the northern government's persecution of Christian leaders. The South is undergoing tribal conflicts, banditry, and fighting between



Messenger file

SPLA factions. In mid-year the Thompsons conclude their assignment with the Presbyterians and SCC. In September, the Schrocks move to the town of Torit in southern Sudan, to work with the NSCC. Roger Schrock reports in a MESSENGER interview that the South has experienced phenomenal church growth during the civil war, and has an amazing level of church vitality, despite loss of leadership and institutions.

1992: Early in the year, Brethren disaster relief workers rebuild structures damaged by war in Torit, where the NSCC is headquartered. In March, the North begins a new military offensive against the SPLA. Some relief agencies withhold aid from the South because they do not want it to fall into the hands of the SPLA. The Church of the Brethren, however, continues to give grants to aid Sudanese refugees and displaced people. In May, Roger and Carolyn Schrock are forced to

leave Sudan when fighting approaches Torit. They move to Kenya and continue to work for the NSCC from there. Brethren staff Phil and Louise Baldwin Rieman begin as community development workers with the NSCC. They start out working in the community of Kaya, in southern Sudan, but in August are evacuated to Uganda along with 100,000 other people fleeing the war. It is announced that peace talks between north and south Sudan are to begin in May, hosted by Nigeria. However, renewed attacks from the North as well as ethnic violence kills thousands in southern Sudan. Meanwhile Sudan is announced to be one of the nations facing the worst drought ever in African history, and the UN estimates that since the renewal of civil war in 1983 approximately 1 million Sudanese have died from war and its effects. In July, the NSCC launches a public policy campaign aimed at stopping the war. It also attempts to mediate between rival rebel factions.



Courtesy of Michael Wagner

Michael Wagner, second from right, views crops with church leaders of the Africa Inland Church-Sudan (AIC).

Development Index. I thought I had seen it all in terms of underdevelopment during the 27 months that I lived and served there. Then I came to southern Sudan. Thanks to decades of war, essential human services there are mostly limited to urban areas. As a

result, rural villagers often have to travel many hours for basic medical attention. The alternative is to bypass these treatments altogether, which unfortunately is often the case.

Additionally, southern Sudan is food insecure. This situation is expected to

deteriorate in the immediate future due to the expected massive influx of people from both northern Sudan and surrounding East African coun-

tries. While many Southerners are returning in anticipation of the birth of a new nation, millions of southern Sudanese living in the North are being relocated to the South to keep them from harm in the post-Referendum period. A similar phenomenon has been witnessed throughout southern Sudan where prices of basic commodities have increased significantly in recent weeks as shopkeepers—many of whom are Arab Muslims from northern Sudan and countries such as Somalia—have boarded up their shops, fearing that they could be targeted for acts of violence in the aftermath of the Referendum.



WCC - Peter Williams / Messenger file

Phil and Louise Rieman, front right, were community development workers in Sudan in the 1990s.

1993: Brethren staff are working on behalf of the NSCC, based in Kenya but making trips into southern Sudan as called for by the work and as possible given the political and security situation. A Brethren study tour goes to Sudan. The church also starts an "SOS for Sudan" campaign collecting kits of salt, soap, and a towel to distribute to displaced people. A letter to congregations calls for political advocacy for a non-violent resolution of the conflict in Sudan. Southern Sudan continues to suffer from interfactional fighting between rebel groups, and from fighting with the northern military. Early in the year, the NSCC issues a statement accusing the rebels of oppressing their own people. In October, SPLA factions announce a cease fire.

1994: Mary Mason is the only one of seven Brethren workers relating to Sudan to actually be working in the country. She serves with a mobile medical team just north of the border with Uganda. J. Roger and Carolyn Schrock continue in advisory roles with the NSCC in Kenya, after Haruun Ruun is elected the new executive secretary. The Boleyns register a major success in the Nuer Translation Project, when thousands of books are sent into southern Sudan including Genesis, Exodus, and the entire New Testament translated into Nuer. The EDF starts a special project to aid Sudanese refugees living in the Kakuma Camp in Kenya. The Church of the Brethren also starts training people for a new Sudan Accompaniment program at the

request of the NSCC, but the team is never called into action. The SOS Kit campaign continues with a collection at National Youth Conference. As of mid-year, although all sides of the Sudan conflict are involved in peace talks, there is a feeling that little progress is being made.

1996: The Riemans return to the US after completing a three-year term with the NSCC, and the Schrocks have similarly ended their service there. Brethren member Merlyn Kettering begins as an organizational consultant with the NSCC, working out of Kenya.

1997: Three charter flights arrive in southern Sudan, each carrying about a ton of books in the Nuer language. The shipments include portions of Genesis, Exodus, and

Jeremiah, as well as several New Testament books; two books on women in the Old and New Testaments written by Esther Boleyn; and three books teaching about the birth of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and health for women and families. In a MESSENGER article, Boleyn reports that distribution of the complete Nuer Bible is now anticipated for the year 2000. She also notes that Sudan's civil war shows little signs of coming to an end. The NSCC led by Ruun, who receives some of his financial support from the Church of the Brethren, continues to work for peace in the midst of a war-ravaged landscape. Kettering continues to help the NSCC build leadership and development capacity. In July, the council organizes a peace dialogue with the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). One important outcome is an agreement that the NSCC play a facilitating role in the healing of the country. **continued**



Over the past year, the Church of the Brethren through its Global Food Crisis Fund has helped alleviate hunger in areas of southern Sudan hit hard by famine. Shown here, food distribution in the area of Lokwangole.

Another potentially destabilizing factor in the post-Referendum period is the Government of Southern Sudan's lack of diversity. At the moment, most of the high-ranking ministerial and military posts are occupied by persons from the Dinka ethnic group. In his Feb. 2, 2010, congressional testimony on the US government's annual threat assessment, Dennis C. Blair, the director of National Intelligence, stated, "Looking ahead over the next five years, a number of countries in Africa and Asia are at significant risk for a new outbreak of mass killing. Among these countries, a new mass killing or genocide is most likely to occur in southern Sudan." Whereas genocides have traditionally been viewed by the US government as tragedies, this declaration signifies that preventing such events is not only a moral obligation, but is also imperative for ensuring both regional

and international stability and security. There are rumblings throughout southern Sudan that such a conflict would be orchestrated by the Nuer ethnic group, traditional foes of the Dinkas, in collaboration with various Equatorial groups. Such a conflict would further destabilize the Horn of Africa, a region which has been plagued by instability due to al-Shabab's presence in Somalia and the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Southern Sudanese are aware of the challenges that would confront what would be Africa's newest independent state, and the potential difficulties that they may encounter on and after January 9, 2011. As they prepare for what will be only the second democratically held vote since Sudan was granted independence from Great Britain in 1956, most indicate that independence is the only viable option. Southerners believe that they have been second-class citi-

1998: Drought, exacerbated by war, again puts millions at risk of starvation in Sudan. The GFCF responds with a \$75,000 appeal, on top of a new three-year \$238,000 program called "Sudan: Partnership for Peace" to provide development aid, food for children, and peace training. A study tour led by Brethren Witness staff David Radcliff visits the Kakuma camp in Kenya where the NSCC is training a peace group, and Narus in southwest Sudan, location of the Blessed Bakhita Girls School. (In future years, after he leaves the denominational staff, Radcliff will continue in relationship with such institutions in southern Sudan through his New Community Project.)

1999: The Riemans are invited to help the NSCC organize and raise funds for a peace summit between the Nuer and Dinka—Sudan's two largest ethnic groups. Top leadership of the SPLM also is involved in this unprecedented event. Brethren famine relief efforts

Two Nuer in southern Sudan eagerly receive the first Bible in their own language after nearly a decade of translation work.

are being carried out through the NSCC, which itself is receiving financial support from the church.

2000: On Jan. 9, the Nuer Bible is dedicated in Mading, southern Sudan—the first complete Bible to be printed in any Sudanese ethnic language. The ceremony goes forward despite a near-tragic airplane accident. Fortunately no one is hurt when the plane carrying guests to the ceremony rolls on landing. "God is great, we are safe, and the Nuer now have the Bible in their own language," the Boleyns report to MESSENGER. Tut Wan Yoa, chief translator working on the Sudan Bible Society project with the Boleyns, comments, "Finally we can read the message in Nuer." In May, the NSCC facilitates an East Bank Nilotic Peace-to-People Peace and Reconciliation Conference,



bringing together ethnic groups on the east bank of the Nile following the model of the previous year's conference for groups along the west bank. Mark Sloan is working with the NSCC on behalf of the Church of the Brethren and is one of those in attendance. Despite such advances toward peace, "civil war wears on in Sudan," as MESSENGER editor Fletcher Farrar puts it in a September editorial—and has killed nearly 2 million people. Bombing by the North doubles after the government begins getting revenue from oil exports.

2001: The North continues bombing the South. Radcliff as director of the Brethren Witness office makes several trips to Sudan and expresses concern for persecution of Christian leaders by the Muslim-dominated government, and calls for support for NSCC peace work in the South. The GFCF continues funding its "Sudan: Partnership for Peace" commitment. Sloan and Kettering are working for the NSCC.

2002-03: Two Brethren delegations visit Sudan in these years. The second is led by the Riemans. They report to MESSENGER that they see steps toward peace, along with continued suffering from violence and basic human needs being unmet in southern Sudan. Teenage soldiers are being demobilized, peace workers trained by the NSCC are having an impact, and peace agreements between clans and tribes are holding, for example. At the time of their visit, in mid-2003, Sudan is "in

As they prepare for what will be only the second democratically held vote since Sudan was granted independence from Great Britain in 1956, most indicate that independence is the only viable option.

zens in their own country for too long. Additionally, they believe that a federal government based in Juba would be more responsive to the populations that they are supposed to serve, and would use southern Sudan's vast mineral wealth for the development of this region, which historically has been neglected.

As a historic peace church, we Brethren need to hold our Sudanese brothers and sisters in our thoughts and prayers at this momentous time in Sudan's history. Through the power of prayer, Brethren congrega-

tions can form a united presence, capable of magnifying the voices of the Sudanese. Additionally, Americans have not only the right but also the responsibility to ensure that the US government, one of the key signatories to the Machakos Protocol (an agreement on a broad framework signed by the opposing parties in 2002 in Machakos, Kenya), uses its political clout to ensure that the final phase of the CPA is implemented in a manner that will pro-

mote peace, stability, and development in southern Sudan. Doing so will ensure that we, as a global society, will not be forced to utter once more the phrase, "Never again." ❏

"Michael Wagner is the Church of the Brethren's mission staff member in southern Sudan. He has been working as seconded staff with the Africa Inland Church-Sudan (AIC) since July. Additional information about Wagner's work in Sudan can be found at brethren.org."

the thick of the most comprehensive and hopeful peace negotiations to date," Phil Rieman writes. "Sudan's peace hangs in the balance."

2005: On Jan. 9, 2005, Sudan celebrates the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the northern government and the

SPLM/A—even while genocide continues in Darfur. The agreement sets a period of self-rule for southern Sudan until the Referendum vote on self determination for the South, scheduled for Jan. 9, 2011. In October, the Church of the Brethren board approves the "Sudan Initiative" as a new, independently funded

program to place Brethren mission staff in southern Sudan.

2005-08: Staff are hired for the Sudan Initiative and undergo training to carry out a combination of church planting and peace and service ministries, but the initiative is never actually established in Sudan. By 2008, general secretary Stan Noffsinger announces in an



Sudanese celebrates the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

open letter to the church that, "This program has not gone as smoothly as we had hoped. . . . Since taking on this challenge, we have learned a great deal." He explains that, "95 percent of southern Sudan has been exposed to Christianity and has access to existing indigenous churches. . . . The task in this place and time appears to be church-tending more than church-planting."

2010: Grants from Brethren funds send thousands of dollars to southern Sudan for hunger relief, and Global Mission Partnerships provides financial support for pastors meetings preparing for the Referendum. In July, Brethren mission staff Michael Wagner begins work seconded to the Africa Inland Church-Sudan (AIC). His areas

of ministry include peace work and serving as an organizational development advisor to build capacity to implement post-war resettlement and poverty alleviation programs such as education and theological training, health care and agricultural development, women's self-help strategies, and relief efforts. Wagner asks the Brethren for prayer: "Please pray that the southern Sudanese have the opportunity to vote in a fair, just, and peaceful Referendum and that the results of this historic vote be honored in such a way that future conflicts are averted."

Jan. 9, 2011: Southern Sudan holds a Referendum vote, deciding whether to remain with the North as a unified country or to secede. ❏



Merlyn Kettering (left) worked with Haruun Ruun (right) during Ruun's term as executive of the New Sudan Council of Churches.

2004: Ruun receives the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award. He continues to receive financial support for his work with the NSCC through the church's Global Mission Partnerships. The EDF sends grants, and Brethren Witness/Washington Office director Phil Jones is arrested for civil disobedience in front of the Sudan Embassy in Washington, D.C., in response to genocide in Darfur.



“Do you love me?”

by Karen Duhai

I spent a week last June in a Brethren workcamp in Haiti. My companions and I flew to Port-au-Prince, then took a long, bumpy bus ride seven hours north to the city of Saint Louis du Nord. We stayed at a Christian missionary compound there and worked with the Church of the Brethren New Covenant School.

In the mornings, we worked on the new school building, painting and adding a second floor. In the afternoons, we led vacation Bible school for more than 200 school children at the current building.

When I returned to the United States, people asked me if I had a good trip. I never really know how to respond to that question. To me, the word “good” makes it sound like a vacation. This was *not* a vacation. Haiti is hot. And dirty. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Western world. We did not go to Haiti to have a good trip. We went to Haiti to work. And we came home from Haiti knowing a little bit more about love.

We were a novelty in Saint Louis du Nord. When we walked through town, people would come out of their houses to watch us. Children would spy us from their windows and shout “Blanc!” which means white in Creole. I was surprised to hear what we in the United States would consider a racist remark. But this was not a taunt. It was an excited greeting.

Children who were a little braver would run into the street, take our hands, and walk with us. It was rare, in fact, for us to go anywhere without a child on each hand. When we went to church on Sunday, little children squeezed in between us on already packed pews.

It took some getting used to. As Americans, we value our personal space. Most of us have our favorite pews on

Elizabeth Shephard



Elizabeth Shephard

Sunday. We sit in places that are most comfortable for us. No one sits up front because that would be way too close to the pastor. And no one tries to squeeze more than six or seven people into a pew because that would just be uncomfortable.

The Haitian ideas about personal space are definitely different. And so are their ideas about love.

I love you. These three words are important, almost sacred, to us. They are so important, in fact, that we generally reserve them for a select few individuals in our lives: our parents, our siblings, our significant others, our children, maybe our closest friends. To say those words to just about anyone else makes us uncomfortable.

During our walks to and from school, children whose names I didn't even know would hold my hand. They would walk with me, and they would look me in the eye, and they would say, in their broken English, "I love you. Do you love me? Are you my friend?"

I hesitated. I often said, "Thank you." Or, "Aw." Anything to keep from saying "I love you," in return.

Why? Why do those three words trouble us so? Why were they so hard for me to say?

Those little children, who spoke so few words in English,

understood better than I that love is *not* just a feeling. Love is an action. Love demands justice. Love demands equality. Love demands that we *do*, not just feel. If I say, "I love you," then I cannot ignore you. If I love you, I cannot ignore that you are hungry. If I love you, I cannot ignore that you are thirsty. If I love you, I cannot ignore that you have no shoes on your feet and nowhere to go to school. Because that is God's love. That is Jesus' call to love.

When Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" he does not want to know if we feel warm and fuzzy when we think about him. In fact, he does not want to know how we feel at all. He wants to know what we are going to do. Will we feed his lambs? Will we take care of his sheep? Will we feed them?

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Even in this time of recession, most people in the United States have good food to eat, good water to drink, clean clothes to wear, and safe houses in which to live. In the midst of our privilege, we can lose sight of the things we do not know—the things that others can teach us about ourselves and our faith.

I do not know what is like to lose everything in a matter of seconds. The earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti,

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Elizabeth Shephard

Karen Duhai and other workcampers prepare a "Jonah and the whale" skit for the children.

took less than a minute to destroy an entire city. I do not know what that is like. I do not know what it is like to live in a city that has been reduced to rubble, where buildings have collapsed onto streets. I do not know what it is like to live in a shelter

made out of cardboard boxes and a tarp. I do not know what it is like to have to wait in line for food or clean water every day. I do not know what it would have been like to grow up without an education, with no opportunity to grow and learn, with no hope for a brighter future. What we forget when we look at Haiti is that the earthquake that destroyed a city took less than a minute, but the poverty that is destroying the country has been going for decades. Most of us do not know what it is like to live in a place like that.

At the same time, these children taught me more about love and hospitality in a week than I had learned in 25 years. We came as strangers, and they guided us. They took our hands and they walked with us. They taught us bits of Creole. They listened with rapt attention as we presented our daily Bible stories. They sang their hearts out in front of us. They did not know us. They could have shut their doors to us. They could have ignored us, or made fun of us. Instead, they walked with us wherever we needed to go. They loved us.

Just before the last supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. This was an incredible act because, in those days, people walked around in sandals all day, so their feet were pretty dirty. Having Jesus wash their dirty feet was embarrassing for the disciples, but for Jesus it was an intimate gesture of love. It was his way of welcoming them not only to his

table, but into his life, and thus, into his call of love.

In Haiti, feet get gross. Like the disciples, many of us trekked around in sandals or flip-flops, so our feet also got pretty disgusting. There is a great shortage of clean water in general and hot water in particular in Haiti, so our showers were always cold and short, which meant we did not always get clean. Our young friends, however, were always concerned for our safety and cleanliness. It rained heavily in Haiti once or twice while we were there, creating rivers of muddy water in the middle of the streets. The children who walked us to and from school were careful to steer us around them, even if it meant walking through the puddles themselves. They were very careful about not getting us dirty.

One day, however, a little boy, excited to be close to us, stepped on my flip-flop as I was walking, and it came off my foot. One of the children who had become my friend immediately knelt down and brushed the dirt off of my foot with his tiny bare hands.

I was embarrassed. This small boy, who had been wearing the same outfit all week and whose own shoes were badly worn out and poorly fitted, was doing his best to clean my feet. He had guided me through his town and taught me little bits of Creole, and there he was, without even realizing it, teaching *me* what it means to love.

Today's world is hurting in an overwhelming way. Our neighbor is no longer just the person who lives next door. Thanks to better technology and improved means of travel, we truly live in a global community. That fact is incredibly



Elizabeth Shephard

As our friends, these Haitian children guided us quite literally through the potholes of their community. They showed us love and hospitality, but they also called on us to be their friends.

daunting because we are called to love to one another, a love that demands our actions wherever there is pain, injustice, and need. We are called to places like Haiti, Sudan, and Iran, and when they ask us, "Do you love me?" we are called to respond with a resounding, "Yes! I love you." That call is terrifying, because if we say, "I love you," we cannot ignore what is happening in the world. We must respond.

Thankfully, we are not alone in this call. The call to love is not only a call to action, it is a call to community. I learned that in Haiti as well. The children asked not only "Do you love me?" They also asked "Are you my friend?" Friendship is not one-sided. Friendship implies give-and-take. It requires an active participation in the life of another. Jesus called his disciples friends because they were a part of his ministry. He included them in his life and his work, and he demanded the same in return.

When we go out into the world to do God's work of love,

God goes with us. Like the Haitian children who did not wait to be invited, who did not ask if we might want a friend on our journey, God takes our hand and comes with us wherever we go because God is our friend and God is active in our lives.

As our friends, these Haitian children guided us quite literally through the potholes of their community. They showed us love and hospitality, but they also called on us to be their friends. They called us to love them as they loved us. We can only hope that through our work, we were able to respond.

Do you love me? Jesus is asking. How will we respond? Will we follow him? **W**

Karen Duhai is the Middle Pennsylvania District youth coordinator and a Connections student at Bethany Theological Seminary. The 2010 workcamp to Haiti was her first workcamp experience.



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The third way to faithfulness

by Allen Hansell

My topic for this Bible study—the **third way to faithfulness**—suggests that there are at least two ways that are not faithful.

One is “tolerance,” and the other is “our way is the only way to truth.” Both are prominent in our world.

Generally speaking, tolerance is a good thing. We try to be tolerant of others; we teach our children to be tolerant of those who may be different. However, I want to challenge us to see the negative side of tolerance.

Listen to what the elder said about the church at Laodicea, in Revelation 3:15-16. “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Tolerance can mean a couple of things. 1) We can become so jaded by the culture around us that we become like the culture. Evil can come to us in sheep’s clothing, Jesus said. If we are not alert, evil begins to look like a friend. 2) Tolerance can also mean that we do not want to risk taking a stand for what is right. This was the elder’s criticism about the church at Laodicea. Christians were suffering at the hands of the Roman authorities, and the Laodiceans were silent. Why? They felt that tolerance toward the Roman authorities would provide them with a better life. They did not want to risk taking a stand.

The elder actually believed that it would be healthier for the Christians at Laodicea to oppose the teachings of Christ than to take no position at all—an interesting thought.

Tolerance can be a way of playing it safe, because taking stands might cost something. Tolerance can mean we just want to protect what we have, not wanting to rock the boat, not wanting to take a risk.

In the first century, taking a stand for Christ was risky. The cost could be loss of employment, property, loved ones, or your own life. The Laodiceans were tolerant. They were afraid to stand up for what they believed. The Elder

judged them to be unfaithful.

But what about the assertion that “our way is the only way”? What is one to think when all major religious bodies, including Christianity, claim the only true path to God? Consider the following:

Our Jewish neighbors are still waiting for the Messiah. Jesus, to them, was a prophet, a great teacher, but not the Messiah.

Buddhism claims that the Buddha was *the* Enlightened One, and his path is the path to enlightenment.

Islam claims that Allah is the only true God, and that Mohammed is his latest revelation.

Our Hindu neighbors firmly believe in reincarnation, and that eventually the believer will achieve nirvana.

Christianity says that Jesus is the only way to God. The gospel quotes Jesus as saying, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

What is God to do with us? Which way is the correct way? Many claim absolute truth. The claim of absolute truth has led to many unholy actions on the part of many, including Christians. The radical wing of Islam today believes that killing “infidels” (all non-Muslims) is doing Allah a favor. Therefore, they justify killing anyone in their way, including innocent children.

However, we dare not forget our own Christian heritage. The Christian church engaged in nine crusades between 1095 and 1201. Christians of Western Europe, believing in the absolute truth of John 14, fought for 200 years to rid the world of Muslims, Jews, and even Russian and Orthodox Christians of Eastern Europe. The worst battles were in the Middle East, where Western Christians saw it as their destiny to kill all Muslims in Jerusalem and other parts of the Middle East. Christian leaders promised the crusaders instant forgiveness of sins and the reward of heaven if they were killed in battle. Sound familiar?

PAUL DID NOT JUDGE THEM. HE ACCEPTED THEM WHERE THEY WERE, AND THEN HE TOLD THEM ABOUT JESUS.

A Christian preacher in Florida grabbed headlines last year by threatening to burn copies of the Koran—which he would do in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

When Jesus gave his disciples the teaching in John 14, I don't think he ever meant it to be used as a club to ridicule others, to condemn others to hell, as some do.

Is there a third way to faithfulness? I believe there is, and I believe it is biblical.

One day, while visiting Athens (according to Acts 17), Paul went to the famous Areopagus, and he noticed 12 altars to the gods in the Greek pantheon. "Athenians," he said, "I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and

everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things."

Paul took the high road with his comments. He absolutely did not express a *tolerance* toward what he considered to be pagan gods in the Greek pantheon. But take note of what he did. Before he told them about God the creator, he complimented them for being religious. He did not condemn them; he did not judge them. He accepted them where they were, and then he told them about Jesus. He was strong enough in his convictions that he believed that if they really heard about Jesus, they would change and become followers. He didn't claim absolute truth, even though he believed in John 14. He proclaimed the gospel without needing to condemn anyone else. The Greeks, and later the Romans, would have to decide for themselves if Jesus is the only way to God. His job was to plant the good seed, and let God take care of the growth.

This is the third way to faithfulness. We need to be clear about what we believe as followers of Christ, and we must accept the challenge of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. We are called to take the gospel to all the world, and to baptize persons in the name of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

But, as Paul did, we are to acknowledge the faithfulness of others, seek to work with other believers who differ from us, affirm their freedom to promote their religious views (just as we want that same freedom).

Our calling is to be faithful to Jesus, seeing him as "the way, and the truth, and the life." Nothing is gained by trying to force others to accept that truth.

Two great commandments, Jesus said, fulfill the law and the prophets: We are to love God with our whole being, and our neighbor as ourselves. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, and many others are our neighbors. God made all of us and I think God loves all of us.

The third way, for us as Christians, means being unashamed to proclaim Christ as Lord and savior, being willing to risk our lives and all possessions for the sake of Christ. Let us be faithful to Jesus. God will decide who has the truth and who doesn't. ❗

Allen Hansell is moderator of the Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, and is a former pastor and district executive of the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren.



Paul Preaches to The Thessalonians by Gustave Doré

Peace church conference in Latin America issues 'Letter from Santo Domingo to All Churches'

Representatives of the Historic Peace Churches in Latin America have issued a "Letter from Santo Domingo to All Churches" as a joint declaration calling on churches worldwide to commit to work to overcome violence.

The conference on Nov. 27-Dec. 2, 2010, was the fourth and final of a series of peace church conferences that have been part of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). More than 70 Brethren, Friends (Quakers), and Mennonites from 18 countries gathered in the Dominican Republic on the theme, "Hunger for Peace: Faces, Paths, Cultures." The effort flows into the culminating conference of the DOV, the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in Jamaica later this year.

The final document from the conference is written in 13 sections beginning with an overview of the history of the event, and the types of stories and theological reflections offered during the conference. It continues with calls to care for vulnerable communities, shared challenges for peacemaking, concerns for particular political and disaster-related situations in certain countries, calls for peace churches to help build public policy and to work

together, and dreams for the overcoming of violence.

The letter closes with the invitation for "all churches in Latin America and around the world to come together in this movement to overcome violence and reject any possibility of just war." (Find the full letter, in Spanish and English, at www.brethren.org/DRconference.)

The letter was formulated by a small committee that gathered a "sense of the meeting" out of the presentations at the conference, with an approval process conducted in the consensus tradition of the Friends. The formulating committee had the job of reducing several days of presentations, testimonies, reports, and personal stories into a document of common understandings. The committee included César Moya, Delia Mamani, and Alexandre Gonçalves.

Testimonies shared during the conference revealed difficulties as well as opportunities for success for Brethren, Mennonite, and Quaker churches working for peace in Latin America and the Caribbean. The reports and stories of church programs, and other personal efforts, were addressed to broad areas of peacemaking, justice and human rights work, and services meeting human needs. The theological roots of peacemaking in the three peace church traditions also were presented.

Suely and Marcos Inhauser of Igreja da Irmandade (Church of the Brethren in Brazil) closed the conference with a sermon preached at host congregation Mendoza New Anointing Church of the Brethren, a Haitian-Dominican church. The story of the resurrected Christ appearing to his disciples while they were in hiding from the authorities was related to the Haitian experience of oppression and discrimination in the DR, and became a challenge for conferencegoers to confront violence and oppression head on.

"I really love this Jesus of ours because he was so courageous," the Inhausers preached, pointing out that after the resurrection Jesus returned to



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Alexandre Gonçalves (left), president of Igreja da Irmandade (the Church of the Brethren in Brazil) gave one of the keynote presentations to the Historic Peace Church conference in Latin America. At right is Marcos Inhauser, a coordinator for the Church of the Brethren mission in Brazil, who served as translator for the session.

the same city in which he had suffered torture and death. Nothing can be done about violence and oppression if we run away, they said, "We have to face it with a witnessing presence." They called believers to move out of shelter and hiding and into the world as disciples of Christ. "I need you to get out and spread the peace."

The planning committee for the conference included Church of the Brethren representatives Felix Arias Mateo, Irvin Heishman, Marcos Inhauser, and Donald Miller; Mennonite representatives Alix Lozano, Willie Hugo Pérez, and Daryl E. Yoder-Bontrager; and Aminda de Arévalo, Loida Fernandez, and Paul Mitchell representing the Society of Friends.

Enten Eller of Bethany Theological Seminary provided webcasts of many of the presentations during the conference. Find recordings at www.bethany-seminary.edu/webcasts/PeaceConf2010. An online photo album is available at www.brethren.org.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Donald Miller (at right) has been a moving force in the series of Historic Peace Church conferences taking place during the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). He is shown here giving background and history on the DOV to the peace church conference.

Brethren celebrate building of 85th new home in Haiti

The Church of the Brethren has been providing help to communities and neighborhoods of L'Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Haitian Church of the Brethren) to gain access to clean water during the cholera outbreak in that country.

As of mid-November, 100 new water filters had been distributed to the Haitian congregations by Brethren Disaster Ministries, with another 100 filters to come.

A new well dug with funding from Brethren Disaster Ministries has proved to be an artesian well capable of providing a steady flow of clean water for one neighborhood where Haitian Brethren live.

Also, a cistern for collecting rainwater, funded by the Global Food Crisis Fund, has been completed on the island of La Tortue. This cistern will serve a school supported by a Haitian Church of the Brethren congregation in Miami, Fla.

The Haitian Brethren had not been severely affected by the epidemic, as of mid-November when Jeff Boshart, Haiti coordinator for Brethren Disaster Ministries, returned from a week visiting church leaders and partner organizations in Haiti. "Except for the Peris congregation near St. Marc, where one church member lost her life to the epidemic, they have no other reports of anyone even being sick," Boshart said.

All of the congregations of Haitian Brethren have been informed about the need for disease prevention, according to Klebert Exceus, Haitian consultant to Brethren Disaster Ministries who supervises disaster rebuilding projects.

During his trip to Haiti, Boshart, Exceus, and Yves Jean—the moderator of the Haitian Brethren—met with staff of IMA World Health to do planning for the new Brethren health care initiative. During the meeting, "IMA encouraged our churches



Jeff Boshart

The 85th house built in Haiti by Brethren Disaster Ministries is providing a home for the family of Jean Bily Telfort, general secretary of Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Haitian Church of the Brethren). The Telfort family lost their home in the January earthquake last year.

to have water treated with Clorox, a basin, and soap available," in order to fight the spread of cholera, Boshart said. "They encouraged us to have all churchgoers wash their hands before entering their church buildings for worship."

In an aside, he added that Haiti mission coordinator and Miami pastor Ludovic St. Fleur joked, "Instead of being a church known for washing feet, we might become known as a church that washes hands."

Brethren Disaster Ministries also is celebrating completion of its 85th house in Haiti. "This is a special house," Boshart said, "as it is the first permanent house to be built for any of the Brethren earthquake victims." The recipient family of Jean Bily Telfort, general secretary of the National Committee of the church in Haiti, were among the over one million people displaced by the earthquake.

University of La Verne selects new president

The University of La Verne, in La Verne, Calif., has chosen its next—and first female—president. Devorah Lieberman will become the 18th president of the university, following Steve Morgan, who will retire in June after serving for 26 years in that role.

Lieberman, who most recently served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Wagner College in New York, brings an strong resume as an educator and an administrator. During the past seven years at Wagner College, Lieberman led the development and expansion of the school's international program and civic engagement initiatives. When she started at Wagner, only 8 percent of students studied abroad. By the end of her seven-year tenure, that figure had grown to 25 percent.

That's likely to make La Verne a good fit for Lieberman, as Morgan has emphasized the value of diversity for years.

"In selecting Dr. Devorah Lieberman, a remarkable academic senior administrator and engaged educator, our trustees have made an exceptional decision that will benefit La Verne for many years to come," Morgan said.

"I believe that the values and mission that provide for the foundation for this university reflect the very best of a private liberal education." Lieberman said. "I look forward to working closely with the entire university community . . . to create an environment where all students, faculty, and staff can achieve their greatest potential."

University of La Verne



Progressive Brethren Gathering hears from seminary president

Bethany Seminary president Ruthann Knechel Johansen called for a new sense of wonder in a time of “dis-ease,” as she gave the keynote address to the Progressive Brethren Gathering in North Manchester, Ind., in mid-November.

The meeting brought more than 200 people from across the country to gather at Manchester Church of the Brethren and Manchester College. Sponsored by Womaen’s Caucus, Voices for an Open Spirit, and the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests (BMC), the gathering explored the theme “Forward Together: Conversations Towards an Enlivened Community.”

The timing of the meeting—during a fall season while Special Response hearings related to issues of sexuality were being held in each district of the Church of the Brethren—made the denominational conversation a backdrop and context for discussion. “Why or how is this moment in our history different than all other moments?” Johansen asked in one of several questions juxtaposing a “holy order” or a “compassionate and just order” over against evidence of dis-ease and disorder in church and society.



Joel Birmingham-Cayford

Bethany Seminary president Ruthann Knechel Johansen speaking at the Progressive Brethren Gathering in November.

Reviewing times of disorder in the biblical record and church history, and current social disorders, she asserted that, “We are entangled in the cultural value of unmindful domination.” This leads to abstracting people into issues, she said, and to attitudes like sexism, militarism, homophobia, racism, materialism.

“How shall we disenthral ourselves” in the face of our own disorders? she asked. Her answer pointed to the order found in the created universe, a natural world she sees as having been given the power to shift and create anew. The example of the root system of the redwood forests offers a model of order for a time of disorder, she noted, as a net-

work of trees that yet maintain individuality.

Another resource for dealing with disorder is the history of forbearance in the Church of the Brethren, Johansen said. She pointed to instances in which congregations have not been forced to comply with Annual Conference decisions, even over historically contentious issues such as the ordination of women and the peace witness.

Forbearance, however, requires discernment, and “discerning the role of boundaries or rules is particularly difficult in the church,” she said, especially when the secular world calls for sharp divides.

The ultimate solution is to become “incarnational people,” she concluded. Incarnational people, she said, are those who accept the invitation to incarnation with Jesus Christ, who embrace the gift of human embodiment—and sexuality—and who choose to be relational. Incarnation is made possible through the Spirit of God, and without a spiritual awakening, she warned, the church will not realize the Spirit in its midst and will not see the boundary walls already broken down.

“We must carry the incarnation out of the Bible, out of glib protestations of the faith, and into our own bodies,” she said. “There we may meet one another in all our holy diversity.”

In closing, before taking questions, Johansen pointed to a sense of wonder as the key to incarnational living, and to finding “holy order” in a difficult time. Wonder will aid the church in its task of discernment, she said. Wonder also may reduce our anxiety, and lead us back to the study of scripture with greater sensitivity, she added.

Wonder presents the possibility that “new dimensions of God’s reign may arise,” she said. “Wonder is, I think, the soil that nurtures love.”

The gathering also included workshops and daily worship services. In a Sunday school session held after the closing worship service, participants in the gathering and members of the Manchester congregation shared experiences of attending Special Response hearings in different districts. Experiences ranged from very negative to quite positive, from one man’s statement that, “It (the process) was set up for failure,” to a woman’s testimony about a very “mindful” and well prepared process in her district.

However, a variety of concerns about the hearing process predominated in the ensuing discussion. As the session turned to the question of how to respond to eventualities at the 2011 Annual Conference, comments ranged widely from those who openly welcome a schism in the denomination, to those worried about the destructive nature of a church split, to those committed to staying in the denomination.

Carol Wise of BMC closed the gathering with a plea to care for people who may be subjected to hurtful comments during the Special Response hearings, because of their sexual orientation or that of family members. “I’m very concerned about that as we move through this process,” she said, “the way we’ve put a particular community on display and on trial.”

Information about the Church of the Brethren’s Special Response process is at www.cobannualconference.org/special_response_resource.html.



Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 291 held orientation Sept. 26-Oct. 15, 2010, in Oregon. The unit was the largest in several years, with more than 30 volunteers: *(First row, from left)* Rachel McBride of North Liberty (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, to Camp Courageous in Monticello, Iowa; Clara Nelson of Cloverdale (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult Ministries in Elgin, Ill.; Malea Hetrick of Port Matilda, Pa., to Colegio Miguel Angel Asturias in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala; Sarah Hall of Manchester Church of the Brethren in N. Manchester, Ind., to Emmanuel Baptist Church in El Salvador; A.J. Detwiler of Fairview Church of the Brethren in Williamsburg, Pa., to Camp Blue Diamond in Petersburg, Pa. *(Second row)* Alissa Cook of Dublin, Ohio, to Quaker Cottage in Belfast, N. Ireland; Shannon Pratt-Harrington of Athens, Ohio, to Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md.; Ashley Reber of Roanoke Rapids, N.C., to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Michelle Cernoch of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to L'Arche in Cork, Ireland. *(Third row)* Jeremiah Zeek of 28th Street Church of the Brethren in Altoona, Pa., to Camp Mardela in Denton, Md.; Callie Surber, orientation staff; Jamie Jamison of Ottawa (Kan.) Community Church of the Brethren, to Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren; Chelsea Goss of West Richmond Church of the Brethren in Henrico, Va., to On Earth Peace in Portland, Ore.; Britta Copeland of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, to the Palms Retirement Community in Sebring, Fla.; Alicia Camden of Virginia Beach (Va.) Christian Church Uniting, to the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C.; Jonathan Bay of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, to Hopewell Inn in Mesopotamia, Ohio. *(Fourth row)* Jon Zunkel, orientation staff; Dana Cassell, orientation staff; Don Knieriem, orientation staff; Elvira Firus of Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany, to Meeting Ground in Elkton, Md.; Andreas Rohland of Bayreuth, Germany, to Lancaster (Pa.) Area Habitat for Humanity. *(Fifth row)* Bahirah Adewunmi of College Park, Ga., to the Church of the Brethren/National Council of Churches office in Washington, D.C.; Han Tim Dowdle of Lelystad, Netherlands, to CooperRiis in Mill Spring, N.C.; Caroline Ryan of Brookhaven, Pa., to East Belfast Mission in Belfast, N. Ireland; Rebecca Rahe of Bad Salzuflen, Germany, to Family Abuse Center in Waco, Texas. *(Sixth row)* Tim Dowdle of Lelystad, Netherlands, to CooperRiis; Mike Nicolazzo of Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to Kilcranny House in Coleraine, N. Ireland; Thorsten Hagemeyer of Berlin, Germany, to Talbert House in Cincinnati, Ohio; Jacob Short of Stryker, Ohio, to Center on Conscience and War in Washington, D.C. *(Seventh row)* Carol Fike of Freeport (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, to the Youth and Young Adult Ministries; Josh Schnepf of Beaverton (Mich.) Church of the Brethren, to Brethren Disaster Ministries; Rider Frey of Riley, Kan., to Camp Myrtlewood in Myrtle Point, Ore.; Rachel Gehrlein of Glenmoore, Pa., to the Family Abuse Center; Jonathan von Rueden of Wiesloch, Germany, to Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati, Ohio; Elias Knoechelmann of Gieboldehausen, Germany, to Project PLASE in Baltimore, Md.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Jan. 3 Youth/Young Adult Ministries Workcamp registration begins at www.brethren.org

Jan. 10 National Junior High Conference registration begins at www.brethren.org

Jan. 17 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 18 Church of the Brethren Credit Union Board Meeting

Jan. 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Jan. 23-30 Brethren Disaster Ministries Workcamp in Haiti

Jan. 25 First Day of Spring Semester at Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

Jan 30-Feb. 18 Brethren Volunteer Service Winter Unit Orientation, Gotha, Fla.

Feb. 6 Service Sunday

Little Town of Bethlehem

Waging peace against all odds in the Holy Land

Despite our fond Christmas notions associated with the town of Bethlehem, in the gospel birth narratives it is peppered with images of foreign occupation, displacement, and the politics of violence and death. Certainly, Herod's paranoid massacre of Bethlehem children comes to mind (Matt. 2:16-18), but the fact that Mary and Joseph must journey to their own hometown also implies some form of displacement in the wake of Roman occupation. Nevertheless, Augustus' census locates Jesus' birth on a world-stage, suggesting that this good news is for "all the people" (Luke 2:10). The journey of the three wise men to



MICHAEL MCKEEVER

Bethlehem also underscores the universal import of this birth. Later church tradition suggests that each of the wise men represented one of the three different branches of the human family.

In like manner, the recently released documentary *Little Town of Bethlehem* presents images both of the ongoing cycle of violence in Bethlehem and the West Bank, and of good news of peaceful initiatives with global relevance.

This well-crafted film does not approach the topic from the perspective of which side is right or wrong, but rather through three personal journeys to peacemaking by a Palestinian Christian, a Palestinian Muslim, and an Israeli Jew.

Sami Awad is a Palestinian Christian whose grandfather was killed amid the violence in Jerusalem in 1948. Yet now he directs Bethlehem's Holy Land Trust, a non-profit organization that promotes Palestinian independence through peaceful means. Throughout the film, Sami reflects on Jesus' teachings on peacemaking, as well as the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King as the film nimbly dances between clips of civil rights clashes and contemporary scenes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ahmad Al' Azzeh is a Palestinian Muslim who, despite having lived his entire life in Bethlehem's impoverished Azzah refugee camp, is a peace activist who teaches in the nonviolence program at Holy Land Trust.

Yonatan Shapira is an Israeli Jew, a descendent of Zionist settlers, born on an Israeli Air Force base to a squadron commander the year of the Munich massacre, but an articulate voice for the nonviolent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After the Palestinian uprising in 2000, Yonatan, an Israeli Defense Forces helicopter pilot, joined with other

pilots who publicly refused to fly missions that would incur Palestinian civilian casualties. Yonatan went on to co-found Combatants for Peace, composed of Israeli and Palestinian combatants who have renounced violence.

Each of the three men shares his journey to reject violence and to recognize the common humanity of former enemies. Each also speaks of accusations of collaboration with the enemy and threats of violence from his own community.

Little Town of Bethlehem is wise in its approach to a volatile issue. There is neither narrator nor expert to guide us; the film leads through personal narrative and image. Symbols of walls and division—and the underlying fear that sustains both—are woven throughout the film. Juxtapositions of European Jewish ghettos and Bethlehem's Palestinian ghettos appear; the walls and barbed wire of Auschwitz are juxtaposed with those that run through Bethlehem today. Yet these connections are impressionistic; images are glimpsed but interpretation is not propounded. Lively, animated images from the gospel birth narratives—angels, shepherds, and holy family—also come to life on the massive security wall that divides Bethlehem from Israel. The soundtrack exemplifies the film's themes as well, infusing a unique blend of Israeli instrumentalists, Palestinian drummers, and Memphis bluesmen throughout.

Though by no means a definitive account of the hostilities, *Little Town of Bethlehem* appears to succeed on several levels. Those unfamiliar with the history of the conflict will be able to grasp some of the broader context, while those more acquainted with the issues may discover new empathy for each side.

Despite the inability of any film to fully convey the proportions of this tragic, ongoing conflict, the film may be unique in its thoughtful exploration of nonviolence as a means of resolution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If there is any imbalance toward the Palestinian perspective in its presentation, it may be because the film focuses more on the weaker side in a conflict that typically initiates acts of nonviolence.

The last animated image of the film is that of the three wise men arriving with their gifts as a star shines brightly above them and the towering Bethlehem security wall. Despite political opposition and threat of violence, like the wise men of old after the Bethlehem epiphany, the road to a secure homeland may entail an alternative path (Matt. 2:12). 

Michael McKeever is professor of biblical studies at Judson University in Elgin, Ill., where he also directs the *Reel Conversations* film series. He is a member of the Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: Little Town of Bethlehem. **Rating:** PG-13. **Released:** 2010. **Running time:** 77 minutes. **Written, directed and filmed by:** Jim Hanon. It was released by EthnoGraphic Media, an educational, non-profit (501c3) organization. A description of the trailer says *Little Town of Bethlehem* "is an inspiring true story of three men in a land gripped by fear, hatred, and division. Expected to be enemies, they instead strive together to end the cycle of violence."



ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Bridgewater College is one of the best colleges and universities in the Southeast, according to *The Princeton Review*. The New York City-based education services company selected Bridgewater as one of 133 institutions it recommends in its "Best in the Southeast" section in its *2011 Best Colleges: Region by Region*.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Donald B. Kraybill, senior fellow in the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College, is author of the just-released *Concise Encyclopedia of Amish, Brethren, Hutterites, and Mennonites*, published by Johns Hopkins Press. The compilation is the only volume to provide a broad overview of Anabaptists in 17 North American countries, and a directory describing all North American Anabaptist groups.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata College made the top 100 in Kiplinger's Personal Finance ranking for *Best Values in Private Liberal Arts Colleges*. The 2010-2011 rankings mark the first time Juniata, which placed 63rd, has been included in the annual poll, which lists liberal arts colleges and universities that "deliver a high quality education at an affordable price."

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

Círculo de Lectores (Barcelona, Spain) has just released a Spanish translation of interim dean Jonathan L. Reed's book, *Excavating Jesus*, co-authored with John Dominic Crossan. Titled *Jesús desenterrado*, the book explores how current archaeological work sheds light on the socio-political message of the earliest Christians. Reed's work has previously been translated into German, Korean, Portuguese, and Hungarian.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester College has received a \$35 million grant from Lilly Endowment to launch a School of Pharmacy. The grant – the largest in Manchester College history – will help the college develop its first doctoral program on a Fort Wayne, Ind., campus, surrounded by regional hospitals, pharmacies, and health care facilities and services.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

Unprecedented growth in the visual arts program at McPherson College is requiring an expansion of time slots for senior exhibitions. Since 2003, the program has grown from needing only April and May for senior exhibitions to also needing December and January. "I'm really pleased with the growth of the program," said Dee Erway-Sherwood, associate professor and program director of graphic design.

Senior high youth search for "Hidden Treasure"

No pirates were involved, but about 100 senior high youth and advisors came to Manchester College Nov. 13-14 to seek "Hidden Treasure" at the 2010 Powerhouse Church of the Brethren regional youth conference.

Participants came from six districts spanning Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois as the conference received a "reboot" in a new format and new time of year after a two-year absence. The conference was organized by Manchester's Campus Ministry office, and many Brethren college students assisted with the weekend.

Three worship services looked at "The Treasure Within" (our unique gifts and talents), "The Treasure Among Us" (our larger faith community), and "The Treasure Before Us" (scripture and the pursuit of wisdom). Angie Lahman Yoder, a Manchester alumna from Peoria,

Ariz., spoke at two of the services, and another alumna, Brethren videographer Dave Sollenberger of North Manchester, Ind., wove reflections amid a series of video clips at the other.

Manchester sophomore Kay Guyer, an art major, created three colorful banners that hung in Wampler Auditorium to illustrate the themes.

Other highlights of the weekend included a high-energy concert by Mutual Kumquat, a popular band composed mostly of Manchester graduates, and a selection of breakout sessions led by denominational leaders, local pastors, and Manchester faculty on themes of vocation, service, salvation, and wisdom literature. Youth also had time to explore the campus, play games, do creative arts, or relax.

Feedback was positive, and another conference is tentatively being planned for next fall. Watch for details at www.manchester.edu.



Mutual Kumquat members Seth Hendricks, Ben Long, Drue Gray, and Chris Good delivered a high-energy concert at the Powerhouse regional youth conference.

Walt Witschek



Youth and advisors who attended the new Powerhouse regional youth conference gather for a group photo in front of Manchester's actual "Power House" building.



Love your life

Remarkable Dining & Catering



{ Executive Chef Christian Laire }
Ask any resident, staff member or even guests about the dining experience at Hillcrest and you'll hear them rave about the culinary wizardry of Chef Christian Laire. Educated in the French system of culinary education known as Culinary Aptitude, Chef Laire worked in several restaurants, including his own and in many different countries.



Chef Laire welcomed the opportunity to join Hillcrest. He enjoys that his work is mission-driven and has purpose. He has a relationship with the residents; he sees them everyday, they give him feedback and he can see the results of his efforts in the kitchen. That connection and exchange allows him to give back through his cooking and to make Hillcrest residents happy.

Remarkable Wellness Program



{ Resident Sharon Wright }
"I'm busier than ever, but having so much fun! Between my clients, the drama club, and swimming, the excitement never ends! I can't think of any place else on Earth like this. The freedom to do as much as or as little as you want is limitless. Hillcrest is like a B&B but more than that – it's an extended family."



{ Residents Joan & Jack Rosenbrock }
Joan and Jack Rosenbrock enjoy the quiet life at Hillcrest, especially their relaxing outdoor space, where they often have a glass of wine and chat with neighbors. "It's like having another room" says Joan. Also very active in water aerobics, Joan raves "the Aquatic Center alone is worth moving to Hillcrest for!"

Remarkable Residents



{ Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }
Jerry and Berkley Davis are very involved at Hillcrest, participating in several aspects of campus life. Jerry heads up Channel 3, the community's in-house television station, while Berkley serves on the management team of the Hillcrest gift shop and assists with the production of "Hillcrest Happenings," the community's resident newsletter. "There is more to do and learn here than one can imagine," says Jerry. "I think we made a good choice in Hillcrest!"



{ Resident Ann Doty }
Ann's advice on making the move to a retirement community. "Remember that nothing is certain, everything changes and we don't know what the future holds – so look at it as an adventure!"



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“ We support one other despite our differing interpretations of what makes for peace. Perhaps we can continue to be an example to the world as we remain one body in Christ seeking the will of God in other areas of life and faith.”

strongly disagree on how to faithfully fulfill this biblically based statement. We support one other despite our differing interpretations of what makes for peace. Perhaps we can continue to be an example to the world as we remain one body in Christ seeking the will of God in other areas of life and faith.

David W. Miller
Hanover, Pa.

Does our dogmatism trump compassion?

I am writing in support of compassion. Recently, I attended a district hearing on dealing with controversial issues. In the group of 20 people that I was a part of, it seemed to me that dogmatism trumped compassion. Also, in the October issue of MESSENGER there were two letters where I thought it sounded like dogmatism trumped compassion. I would like to ask those people who use this method to promote their opinion: Where in the Gospels do you find Jesus using that method of teaching? As I read the Gospels, I find that many times Jesus came into conflict with the religious leaders. Jesus stressed the “spirit of the law” rather than the “letter of the law.” The religious leaders were using dogmatism to trump compassion.

In my opinion, to take scripture out of context is a flagrant misuse of scripture. Also, I am personally offended every time I hear the phrase: “Go and sin no more” emphasized, while ignoring the first part “Neither do I condemn you.”

To call homosexuality a sin is condemning to homosexuals. I agree that homosexual activity is sinful for me and all other heterosexuals. As for the other 10 percent who find themselves to be homosexual, I think it should be left up to God, where it belongs.

Let us strive to be more compassionate in our relationships with our brothers and sisters who are gay.

Dick Foust
New Lebanon, Ohio

Diversity is God’s pattern

Rebecca Herder suggests that we need a two-position paper to allow us

to live with our differences. I agree with her, and we have such an example in the 1979 Annual Conference paper, “Biblical Inspiration and Authority.” It says, in part:

“In spite of an essential unity, diversity is God’s pattern in creation. God’s delight in variety is expressed in countless ways (Psa. 104). To those who walk in the spirit, varieties of gifts are given (1 Cor. 12:4). Conformity is humanity’s pattern. It is the way of the world to try to force individuals into a uniform mold. Jesus denounced the Pharisees for doing this. The Pharisees showed their authority over the people by trying to enforce the minutia of every law without themselves lifting a finger to help (Matt. 23:4). Paul warned the Christians in Rome, ‘Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold. . . . Rom. 12:2, J.B. Phillips). There have been times in our history when the Brethren have fallen into the error of insistence on rigid conformity,

A sinful lifestyle choice

I am troubled by a “lifestyle choice” that is affecting the Church of the Brethren. This way of living has been proclaimed as a sin by Annual Conference. Yet there are among us those who remain unaware of such statements. Some of these people teach our children in Sunday school. And some openly serve as ministers of the gospel. Many of our congregations are tolerant of those who participate in or support this sin. Some congregations affirm and celebrate such a choice.

I have difficulty relating to members of the church who seem to disregard what Brethren have agreed is an integral aspect of what it means to be a Christian. And yet I am willing—as has been the practice of our denomination for decades—to worship, pray, serve, and fellowship with such persons. I am speaking, of course, of those who “encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad,” which is discouraged by the *Statement of the Church of the Brethren on War*.

Since our beginning in 1708, Brethren have repeatedly declared our opposition to war. Our official position through the discernment of Annual Conference is that all war is sin. Yet, somehow, we manage to live together as brothers and sisters even when we

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when we as church members either agreed or we were disfellowshipped.

“Individuality requires freedom.

Respect for freedom is seen in our traditional patterns of traditional Brethren belief in “no force in religion,” and so we avoid patterns of enforcement which violate the freedom of individuals and local groups. In fact, there needs to be an appreciation for diversity and a spirit among us of humility and openness to learn from one another. We need to acknowledge that the perceptions and understandings of all of us are limited and change with our own experiences.” . . .for our knowledge is imperfect. . . we see in a mirror dimly. . .” (1 Cor. 13:9, 12). None of us has captured the kingdom!” (The preceding is taken verbatim from pages 29-30 of “A Study Guide to the 1979 Annual Conference Paper; Biblical Inspiration and Authority.”)

Members of the committee who wrote the entire paper were Wanda W. Button, convener; Dale W. Brown, Joan Deeter, Rick Gardner, Harold S. Martin.

This Annual Conference paper has

given us an option to agree to disagree on issues and still remain in fellowship with one another. May we do so again!

R. Jan Thompson
Bridgewater, Va.

Brethren mustard seeds

The heart of what the Brethren stand for is big and wide. The fruit of the MESSENGER is portrayed in many ways. My daughter, Cindy, recently corresponded with her cousin in New Zealand. Both of them read the MESSENGER. Much of their exchange was about the outreach of service promoted by the Brethren. Using Jeff Mathis as an illustration of a service orientation, they reviewed how Jeff was active in many service projects, such as directing two Civilian Public Service camps, placing pastors in many churches in the Midwest and on the West Coast, and promoting many others through programs such as Heifer International. Much of what the

Brethren do does act as a mustard seed in our world.

Jesus lived and taught that love is an active verb. Witnesses and recipients of love manifest in this manner know what it means to love. Often, those who are recipients of assistance do pass on the gift. Many cups that run over incite others to help fill cups that are empty.

Andrew G. Mathis
Tampa, Fla.

God’s word on the “homosexual movement”

I have served as a deacon in the Church of the Brethren for 35 years. God has blessed the efforts of my wife and me to live for him. I am currently on a committee to address the homosexual movement in the denomination. The Bible, God’s word, is clear on what sin is. One theme throughout the Bible is that God cannot and will not bless sin. God clearly is against all sexual immorality, which includes homosexu-

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The Church of the Brethren has a treasure in its heritage - the often-unrecognized gold of our peace heritage. This heritage helps us find a way to respond to real and challenging problems of violence in our time.

We will spend time looking at the roots of peace in the life of Christian faith (Brethren practice + Biblical roots + experiments in nonviolence).

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How do we actually live out the values of peace and nonviolence, offering God’s shalom and Christ’s peace to the world around us?

—Matt Guynn



Church of the Brethren

ality. God's ways and thoughts are much, much higher than ours (Isa. 55: 8,9). We need to get back to God's word and proclaim it. His word hasn't changed and never will (Isa. 40: 8). Jesus hasn't changed either. He came to save us from sins, not to continue in them.

Tom Bomberger
Salem, Ohio

Reviving forbearance

Recently, in public meetings, sermons, and articles, an alarming chorus is being sung repeatedly: Split the denomination! I do not think this will solve anything. The result would not be two clear divisions, but rather a splintering into many groups the small factions that now coexist within the body. I suggest that instead of splitting we revisit the honorable concept of forbearance, recalled two years ago in an Annual Conference business session.

Forbearance is, unfortunately, an unknown term to many Brethren. It has been out of use for decades. We need to revive, define and clarify the concept. Materials are available. An excellent place to start is an article titled "The Recovery of Brethren Forbearance," in the Fall 2009 edition of *Brethren Life and Thought*.

Forbearance has been practiced by Annual Conference delegate bodies for years (although we have seen less of it recently). For example, there was a time when only white, male, ordained ministers or elders were elected to be moderator of Annual Conference. That has changed. We have since seen in that role men who were not ordained ministers; we have seen both ordained and lay women; we have seen a man and a woman of African-American heritage, as well as a Latino man.

Learning about forbearance will require open minds, serious thinking, and prayerful approaches. We have heard and used far too many extreme statements and un-Christian/Brethren labels, which leave us no space for compromise, no room for forbearance.

Pontius' Puddle



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Denominational Deacon Ministry

Resources

Deacon Manual for Caring Ministries

www.brethrenpress.com

Essential Servants: Reflections on the Caring Ministries of Deacons

www.brethren.org/deacons; click Resources

Basin & Towel

www.brethren.org/basintowel

Deacon E-mail Updates

www.brethren.org/signup

2011 trainings scheduled to date

www.brethren.org/deacontraining

Saturday, February 5

Mexico Church of the Brethren, Peru, Indiana

Saturday, March 19

Freeport (Illinois) Church of the Brethren

Sunday, May 15

County Line Church of the Brethren, Champion, Pennsylvania

Consultation

The deacon ministry also offers consulting services to help you create a spirit-filled deacon ministry in your congregation, or help to breathe new life into the one you have.



Church of the Brethren

For more information on these and other deacon ministry topics, contact Donna Kline, Director of Deacon Ministry, 800-323-8039; dkline@brethren.org

“While God would have us each love one another, the devil grips our hard hearts ever tighter. In fact, our narrow, rigid, and entrenched attitudes serve to drive away more than the “target” group where sexuality is concerned.”

Working our way through this historical, fundamental Brethren concept will be well worth the effort if it keeps the denomination intact and promotes noble, Brethren, Christ-like attitudes and behavior among our members.

Jobie E. Riley
Elizabethtown, Pa.

Another erroneous pathway?

As someone who has been happily married for nearly 40 years, sex is something I'd like to keep between my wife and me. But too many of our

brothers and sisters living outside the “norm” of heterosexual life suffer daily from prejudice and second-rate fellowship in our church groups. Their only crime is to have been born as sexual beings that don't fit conveniently into the Adam and Eve story.

We seem to resemble the early Jewish believers to whom Paul successfully demonstrated that Jesus Christ suffered for everyone, not just circumcised Jews. While God would have us each love one another, the devil grips our hard hearts ever tighter. In fact, our narrow, rigid, and entrenched attitudes serve to drive

away more than the “target” group where sexuality is concerned. Observers of our “fellowship” might watch us and wonder whether they will find refuge and fellowship among us, or just more hypocrisy.

If we would really shine the light of Jesus' teachings on the issue of sexuality, would we find ourselves changing our minds as on many past occasions when Brethren have been compelled to recognize erroneous pathways? Prayerful consideration of plain dress, education, foreign missions, slavery, race, remarriage of divorced persons, women in leadership, etc., were each in turn viewed differently in the full light of Jesus' teachings. If we could set aside personal biases and think about ourselves being on the “other” side, we might just conclude that standing firm on the 1983 position paper on sexuality will be found as insufficient when seen in the true light of God.

Claude Simmons
Churchville, Va.

BE MORE THAN A TOURIST

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- PANAMA CANAL CRUISE TOUR (February 23 - March 5)
- EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 20 - April 2)
- MEDA IN MOROCCO (March 25 - April 5)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (April 27 - May 6)
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- MENNONITE STORY IN POLAND (August 9-17)
- VISIT UKRAINE WITH EDGAR STOESZ (September 19 - 28)
- A PILGRIMAGE TO PORTUGAL (September 20 - 30)
- EXPERIENCE IRELAND WITH THE LEDERACHS (September 22 - October 3)
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A Christian Cruise. Join COB Pastor John and Pastor Linda Stoner as they cruise Canada and New England aboard the stunning liner Poesia. This adventure takes place **September 28 to October 8, 2011** and features bus transportation from Western Pennsylvania. Travel arrangements from any gateway city are possible as well. Departure is from New York City and includes Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Rhode Island. Christian messages, worship and fellowship galore!! Contact: 814-444-8800 or lnjaunts@floodcity.net for details.

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/congregationalvacancies. Contact the appropriate district executive or call the Ministry office at 800-323-8039.

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

New Members

Ashland, First, Ashland, Ohio: Adam Campbell, Barbara Kurzweil, Phyllis Maunus, Peggy Schumacker, Jarrod Shoenberger, Glenn Sprunger, Linda Sprunger, Ron Sprunger, Sue Sprunger, Janey Studer, Tim Studer, Bernice Shreve, Kim Shreve, Larry White
Bedford, Pa.: Catherine Bowser, Lane Karns
Fellowship, Martinsburg, W. Va.: Melodi Shull
Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: Joy Woods
Ivy Farms, Newport News, Va.: Kenneth Peterson, Cynthia Hockaday, Chris Sexton
Lancaster, Pa.: Tristan Turkki
Living Faith, Flora, Ind.: Virginia Brown, Jeff Cook, Kandy Cook, Paige Cook, Mercedes Johnson, McKaylin Lipp, Terry Cossairt, Hunter Cook, Todd Trent, Windy Trent, Lacie Tomson, Cara August
Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Jeff McCarty, Gloria McCarty, Brenda Cowhick Downs, Bruce Crossen, Peggy Ferguson, Vaughn Greenhill, Margaret Keener, Tasha Neahusan, Nick Kaufman, Brenda Swanson
McPherson, Kan.: Melisa Grandison, Jeff Krehbiel
Mountain Grove, Fulks Run, Va.: Raymond Moyers, Betty Moyers, Gena Anderson, Amy Moyers, William Boyer, Jenny Dove, Michael Laprade, Angela Laprade, Megan Sharpe, Keyona Crawford, Becky Showman, David Walker, John Lathe, Jr., Megan Wenger, Verlin Conley
Plymouth, Ind.: Doug Dipert
Ridgely, Md.: Brenda Pierce, Sharon Fooks
Roaring Spring, First,

Roaring Spring, Pa.: Joe Surin, Debbie Surin, Andy Keith
Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Jerry Godsey
South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa: Ron Flory, Denise Flory
Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.: Linda McCauliff
Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.: Jeff Decker, Daisy Decker
Turkey Creek, Nappanee, Ind.: Amanda Anglemyer, Courtney Anglemyer
Uniontown, Pa.: Patricia Lin, Gregory Wilson
Walkers Chapel, Mount Jackson, Va.: Steve Minter, Okie Minter
Waterford, Calif.: Ami Owens, Amanda Jackson, Connie Nichols, Kelly Tomlinson, Cindy Owens, Nick Owens, Sarah Owens, Emily Owens, Josh Stejskal, Stefani Weaver, Sarah Weaver

Wedding Anniversaries

Clem, Richard and Gloria, Hagerstown, Md., 50
Detwiler, Chet and Gladys, Goshen, Ind., 72
Frantz, Dean and Marie, Fort Wayne, Ind., 70
Henry, Maynard and Mary Kate, Hanover, Pa., 60
Knox, Glenn and Doris, Uniontown, Pa., 60
Martin, Harold and Priscilla, Lititz, Pa., 60
Means, John and Juanita, Uniontown, Pa., 55
Moser, Lewis and Grace, Goshen, Ind., 60
Norris, Wilfred and Lona, Huntingdon, Pa., 55
Popejoy, Jerry and Lorraine, Flora, Ind., 50
Shaffer, Ed and Shirley, Uniontown, Pa., 55
Sibbitt, Charles and Margaret, Bringhurst, Ind., 71
Sternner, Harold, Sr. and Carol, Somerset, Pa., 50
Yordy, Marvin and Peggy, Eureka, Ill., 60

Deaths

Algate, Frank, 85, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 17
Bard, Mildred Lorraine, 86, Chambersburg, Pa., Oct. 2

Bennett, Helen Louise, 67, Ijamsville, Md., Oct. 16
Brown, Kenneth L., 77, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 3
Bussey, Paul E., 85, Rocky Mount, Va., Aug. 26
Butts, Laurretta Itnyre, 96, Gapland, Md., Sept. 19
Cober, Robert F., 87, Bedford, Pa., Sept. 25
Coffey, Rachel Kathleen Gordon, 86, Waynesboro, Va., Sept. 28
Colliflower, Eugene Oral, 66, Cabool, Mo., Nov. 7
Cunningham, Arlene, 90, Huntingdon, Pa., May 17
Cunningham, Luella M., 92, Uniontown, Pa., Oct. 11
Dove, Rebecca, 79, Broadway, Va., Sept. 28
East, Margie P., 101, Stuarts Draft, Va., May 10
Flory, Mariel S., 91, Catlett, Va., March 20
Forrester, Penny, 83, Nokesville, Va., May 5
Gelsing, Julia E., 84, Chambersburg, Pa., Oct. 25
Grove, Anna May, 80, Rossville, Ind., Oct. 21
Grove, Garnet L., 92, Saint Thomas, Pa., Oct. 1
Heath, James Stevenson, 64, Basye, Va., July 27
Hess, Anna Mary, 86, Lancaster, Pa., July 19
Hite, Alice Marie, 84, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 11
Honsaker, Bessie F., 86, Martinsburg, W.Va., Oct. 22
Hoover, Lucille F., 94, Plattsburg, Mo., Oct. 28
Johnson, Elden F., 91, Waterloo, Iowa, Sept. 24
Kaysen, Catherine Elaine, 80, Wenatchee, Wash., Nov. 11
Kimble, Mary Martha Fainter, 86, Stuarts Draft, Va., March 31
Kuhn, Selma Schulze, 92, Monroeville, Pa., Oct. 25
Kulp, Dorothy, 92, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 21
Livengood, Katherine, 88, Trent, Pa., Oct. 21
McBride, Carol M., 89, Mount Morris, Ill., Nov. 16
Meloy, Esther M., 92, Huntingdon, Pa., Sept. 12
Miller, Lewis, 87, Smithsburg, Md., Sept. 16
Miller, Ryan T., 25, Nokesville, Va., June 26
Moherman, Virginia P., 86, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 31
Molnar, Mary, 83, Uniontown, Pa., Aug. 17
Mullendore, N. Leo, 79, Boonsboro, Md., Aug. 17
Oberholzer, F. Lorraine, 86, Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 9
Parrish, Maxine C., 78, Ceres, Calif., Nov. 3
Petros, Louie, 85, Modesto, Calif., Sept. 15
Proffitt, Ray Percy, 83, Arrington, Va., Aug. 1
Quarry, Elizabeth S., 84, Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 18
Quigley, Millie S., 88, Modesto, Calif., Nov. 12
Rash, Elhora Susan, 84, Empire, Calif., Aug. 10
Reinhold, F. Lewis, Jr., 88, Lebanon, Pa., Nov. 6
Rodgers, Helene Albine Cline, 93, Fishersville, Va., Nov. 15
Seese, Robert M., 83, Johnstown, Pa., Oct. 22
Shaffer, Harold E., 75, Shrewsbury, Pa., Aug. 16
Shepherd, Raymond, 69, Silver Lake, Ind., Jan. 1, 2010
Shields, Susan A., 62, Greensburg, Pa., Nov. 9
Shiflet, Glen W., 75, Broadway, Va., Oct. 12
Silveus, Eldon B., 86, Bourbon, Ind., Sept. 24
Sphon, Harriet L., 78, Greensburg, Pa., Nov. 16
Stump, Robert M., 90, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 16
Thomas, David R., 67, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 20
Turley, John R., 94, Kokomo, Ind., July 20
Turpin, Geneva Marshall, 85, Floyd, Va., Oct. 21
Venere, Peggy, 60, Manassas, Va., March 4
Weaver, Hubert L., 83, Hershey, Pa., Nov. 5
Wenger, Charlotte, 85, Phoenixville, Pa., Nov. 9
White, Dorothy M., 85, Hardin, Mo., Nov. 25
Wood, Virginia E., 95, Nokesville, Va., Feb. 26, 2010

Ordinations

House, Daniel S., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md.), Oct. 24
Hylton, Gerald L., Virgina Dist. (Stonewall, Floyd, Va.), Oct. 24

Kent, James D., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Welsh Run, Mercersburg, Pa.), Nov. 14
Kinsey, Kevin L., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Wilmington, Del.), Sept. 26
Rissler, Quentin, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Blue Ball, Pa.), Aug. 15
Wintsch, Misty, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa.), Aug. 29

Licensings

Boyd, Logan A., Virgina Dist. (Laurel Branch, Floyd, Va.), Nov. 7
Brackett, Samuel A., Ore./Wash. Dist. (Springfield, Ore.), Oct. 31
Brubaker, Ronald, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Midway, Lebanon, Pa.), July 18
Erhard, Richard P., Mid. Pa. Dist. (Lewistown, Pa.), Oct. 10
Horst, Patricia A., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.), Oct. 5
Liskey, Edwin, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Myerstown, Pa.), Oct. 3
Ortega, David A., Ore./Wash. Dist. (Larchmont, Tacoma, Wash.), Oct. 31
Paulus, Nathan D., S. Ohio Dist. (Bradford, Ohio), Oct. 31
Weber, John, Atl. N.E. Dist. (West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa.), Oct. 10

Placements

Bongard, Merritt, pastor, Lakeview, Brethren, Mich., Oct. 17
Hott, Gerald, from team pastor, Romney, W.Va., to pastor, Living Stone, Cumberland, Md., Nov. 15
Lynde Shultz, Katherine, youth minister, Mountville, Pa., Nov. 1
Mackie, Brian, from interim pastor, New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich., to pastor, White Branch, Hagerstown, Ind., Oct. 17
Raymor, William E., Jr., pastor, Beaverton, Mich., Oct. 24
Tucker, Jack D., pastor, Pleasant View, Mount Jackson, Va., Nov. 24
Vaught, Vassie A., from interim to pastor, Saint Paul, Cana, Va., Nov. 10

Our feats of clay

David Salk has feats of clay. So do we. Feats of Clay is what ceramicist David Salk calls his pottery production enterprise. An artist from the southwestern United States, David Salk is known primarily for his spot-on pottery renditions of Native American woven baskets. (And, if the name sounds familiar, yes, he is the nephew of the famous Jonas Salk, known for his discovery and development of the first safe polio vaccine.)



RANDY MILLER
Interim MESSENGER Editor

David Salk has taken it upon himself to recreate clay versions of Native American baskets dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Place one of Salk's creations next to an actual basket from that era and, standing but a few feet away, you would be hard pressed to tell which is the original and which is clay.

While admiring Salk's work in his gallery in Idyllwild, Calif., some years back, it occurred to me that we too are feats of clay, as 2 Corinthians 4: 6-10; 16-18 (last year's National Youth

Conference theme) reminds us. We are created by God out of dust and given life, and we do the best we can in these mortal shells, these clay jars into which God has poured the

recrimination. We fumble for our bootstraps in an attempt to pick ourselves up and go on, all the while wondering if, even with our boots on, we'll be able to find the road to wholeness. We are so focused on our inadequacies, our very "clayness," that we lose sight of our potential for these vessels to be filled with God's spirit.

Thankfully, the God we've learned about from reading scripture and listening to Jesus is one who loves us in spite of our foibles. God lets us pass "Go." (For those of you who are under 40, this is an indirect reference to a board game called Monopoly. Ask your parents. Actually, if you're under 40 and reading this magazine, thank you, thank you!)

This business of passing "Go" might also be referred to as grace or forgiveness. It means that, despite the fact that we've made some small—and maybe even a few big—mistakes, God is willing to give us another chance. We get a do-over. "Everybody's going somewhere, riding just as fast as they can ride," says songwriter Jackson Browne in "Your Bright Baby Blues." He continues, "I guess they've got a lot to do before they can rest assured their lives are justified. Pray to God for me . . . he can let me slide."

Thank God for that. Really, thank God. Because if we had to live the remainder of our lives under the paralyzing weight of our misdeeds, we might never move forward. But God lets us go. And whether it is every year on Jan. 1, or

SO WE MOVE FORWARD, REMINDED ONCE AGAIN THAT WHILE WE WALK ON FEET OF CLAY, WE ARE IN FACT FEATS OF CLAY CREATED BY A GOD WHO LOVES US AND WANTS US TO SUCCEED.

precious treasure of light and life.

I think about this especially at this time of year, when people look back and evaluate their lives up to this point. Most take stock of where they've been and come up with a few New Year's resolutions: lose weight, start a diary, spend more time with family, etc. And in doing so, they tacitly acknowledge their shortcomings, their feet of clay, and hope that the new year will bring for them a clean slate upon which they can write a new chapter. They see New Year's as a chance to refresh, recharge, and begin anew.

But sometimes, despite our attempts to reevaluate and move ahead, our failures can feel so overwhelming that we can barely move at all. Our weaknesses and shortcomings weigh us down, miring us in a swamp of self-doubt and self-

every 50, as in the year of Jubilee, God frees us—frees us to get out from under that rock and move on. God gives us a "Pass Go," slips \$200 in our back pocket, and says, "Go out there and do better next time. I know you can do it." And, because we don't want to let the coach down, we try to do better. God help us, we try.

So we move forward, reminded once again that while we walk on feet of clay, we are in fact feats of clay created by a God who loves us and wants us to succeed, to live fully despite our shortcomings. And perhaps also mindful—when the sun is shining and the wind is at our back—that we are filled with so much of the Creator's spirit that someone standing but a few feet away might be hard pressed to spot our terracotta toes. 

COMING IN March: Bible study, more on the Special Response Process, media review, reflections, letters, and more.



Passion and Purpose in a Changing World

Romans 12:2

NOAC 2011

Passion Purpose Change

The passion and purpose at the heart of the National Older Adult Conference reflects the desire of older adults to be **aware of, involved in, and connected to** the dynamic world in which we live.

September 5-9, 2011

Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Registration materials will be mailed to past attendees and churches and will be available at www.brethren.org/NOAC in early March 2011.

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Philip Gulley
www.philipgulley.org

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove
www.jonathanwilsonhartgrove.com

C. Michael Hawn
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GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

DeVos Place Convention Center
beside the Grand River



GIFTED WITH PROMISE: EXTENDING JESUS' TABLE



2011 Annual Conference logo designed by Darin Keith Bowman

"In Gifted with Promise: Extending Jesus' Table, Brethren encounter a challenging assignment: (1) to discover afresh their giftedness with Gospel and (2) to envision their role in loving the world enough to share the physical and spiritual benefit of the Gospel. This theme connects our common interests in spirituality and service, practice and prayer. We extend the table with promised resources of grace and love. The theme calls us to mission and evangelism where we not only share and invite but we cultivate discipleship as we offer tangible resources of food, clothing, medical care, and more."

—Robert Alley

2011 Annual Conference moderator



Photos by Keith Hollenberg and Glenn Fiegel

- **MEANINGFUL WORSHIP**
- **POWERFUL MUSIC**
- **ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES**
- **INSIGHT SESSIONS ON MANY TOPICS**
- **CONNECTING WITH OTHER BRETHREN FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

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Church of the Brethren